Oranges and Lemons

By Mary C. E. Wemyss

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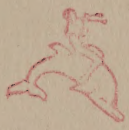
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By Mary C. E. Wemyss

ORANGES AND LEMONS.
IMPOSSIBLE PEOPLE.
PRUDENT PRISCILLA.
PEOPLE OF POPHAM. Illustrated.
THE PROFESSIONAL AUNT.

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
BOSTON AND NEW YORK

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MARY C. E. WEMYSS

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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ORANGES AND LEMONS

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I

The man who lives alone lives long;
The bird is not like that, and so — his song.

IF a bishop had asked Elsie Carston, "Do you really and truly believe that islands, in far-off seas, were made islands and peopled by black races, solely in order that your brother should govern them, and you — in his absence — govern his children?" Elsie would have looked straight into the eyes of the bishop and would have answered, "I do not"; but she did.

If Marcus Maitland had been asked by any one, "Do you really think and believe that God made the hills in India solely for the preservation of the white woman's complexion? that where He did not make hills He did not mean white women to go?" Marcus would have answered, "I do"; but he did not.

So far as Marcus knew, the island chosen for the future education of his brother-in-law, Eustace Carston, in the art of governing might have hills. On the other hand, the faith of some former governor's wife might have removed them and taken

them away with her, there being no limit to the luggaged importance of governors' wives. Marcus knew because he had travelled. He had been on boats where every one was cramped excepting some governor's wife and her suite. He had suffered the indignity of a tropical discomfiture in order that she might acquire an importance that was as new to her as was discomfort to him.

If it had not been for Eustace Carston, he had not travelled. When a man's only sister marries a man he does not know, there are left to him but two things to do — to like him or to leave him alone. Marcus left him alone: left England. He had meant to travel until such time as his sister should write and beg him to come back, but she did not write and beg him to come back. She wrote at intervals saying what a delightful time he must be having; said intelligent things about tropical vegetation; and wrote, as they came, of charming babies, all exactly like their father. Marcus thought they should have been like her and therefore like him; for between him and his sister there was a strong family likeness. In Sibyl's eyes there was no one to be compared with Eustace Carston. He stood alone. Marcus was tired of hearing that, so when an American he met on board ship assured him he was a white man, and suggested they should go into business together, Marcus, after making exhaus-

tive enquiries about the man and his business, agreed. And he went to America; there lived and made money. When he had made as much money as he wanted, he began to long for home and he turned his face homewards, taking with him both the affection of his American friend and an interest in the business. London was still home to him; so he settled there and at certain times of the year turned his thoughts to a moor in Scotland, and at others to his collection of china, pictures, and prints, and so he occupied himself — at leisure. Before he had left England he had begun buying china. He had since learned how little he had then known.

On his return to London the only person he wanted to see was his sister and she was away; and her children were with their aunt in the country. If he could have seen the children without seeing the aunt, he would have done it, but he disliked the aunt. He wondered what Sibyl would do with the children when her husband took up his new appointment. She could not surely ask Carston's sister to have them indefinitely.

It must have been suggested to thousands of bachelor uncles that they should take an interest in their nephews and nieces. And thousands of bachelor uncles must have responded by taking an interest — and more than a life interest — in their

nephews and nieces. The methods of suggestion are usually two. Either by prayer indirectly, or by an appeal, made directly, either after church on a suitable Sunday (the hedges should be white with hawthorns, and the cows, red and white, should be knee-deep in buttercups, and if possible a trout should dart in and out the shallows of the stream); or at Christmas-time when all churches are decorated and all relations are demonstrative.

Either appeal would possibly have moved Marcus Maitland. He was susceptible to environment: had, no doubt, as a boy, tickled trout, and must have known something of the meaning of mistletoe. But of a letter however delicately expressed he was always suspicious. All letters he read, firstly, to see what was in them: secondly, to see what was behind them. In a letter Sibyl told him her husband had been appointed governor of yet another island that was as hot as it was remote: which fact she stated clearly enough. Behind it was the suggestion that no mother could subject so delicate and delicious and new a thing as Diana's complexion to the ravages of so intemperate a climate.

Dear Marcus, — Do you feel inclined to take charge of the child while her parents are governing wisely and well that far-away island? Diana is delightful. If you had not gone round the world, just

as a squirrel goes vaguely round and round its cage, you must have discovered it for yourself.

I want you to have Diana. I could leave her with Elsie, Eustace's sister, who is a dear and so proud of Diana, but she rather resents my having the child when I am at home. So when I go away this time I want to leave her with some one else just to show Elsie I dare. It's a tremendously brave thing to do — requiring true courage on my part — but I must do it because Elsie, having no children of her own, is centring herself on the child, and I know if Diana should want to marry, she might try to dissuade her. So, Marcus, will you have her? Elsie, dear as she is, is rather too strong-minded a woman for a girl to be with altogether. She is a little too earnest and strenuous. I want Diana to frivol. I don't want her to see too deeply into the things of life — yet. Everything with Elsie is spelt with a capital letter, and is heavily underlined. Woman to her is so much more than mere woman. I don't want Diana at her age to be faced with sex problems. Dear Elsie is inclined to see in man woman's chief and natural enemy. You will understand! She wants Diana to do great things in life. I want life to do great things for her. I know you will give her the chance to see its beautiful side, and, of course, if there should be a question of her falling in love — as there is bound to be — you will guide her gently

to fall in love with the right kind of man — a man like — dear old thing, you are bristling all over — did you imagine I was going to say Eustace when I want to persuade you to do something for me? I took the child to her first dance last night. She looked like a rose; her complexion is delicious.

Marcus was glad Diana had a complexion. Was she pretty? He should say not. When especial mention is made of a woman's skin it usually means that it is the only thing that can with truth be commended. If everything else is good, the complexion is thrown in, as it were. Sibyl's had been delicious, and he did not remember mentioning it in writing to any one — not even to his tutor at Magdalen — No!

Marcus returned to the letter. Sibyl was in London and she had not let him know — that was hard to forgive; however, she had now made a definite demand upon him and he must respond. Hitherto she had asked of him nothing more than an unbounded admiration of Carston and that he had been obliged to deny her — on principle. She spoilt Carston, indulged him, so much so that he would allow her, expect her even, to follow him to any and every part of the world regardless of whether the climate were good or bad for a woman's delicate skin.

Marcus rang the bell. To the man who answered it, he said: "Pillar, I am expecting a young lady."

"Ah, sir," said Pillar, "I have been expecting this —"

"Since when?"

"Well, sir, at any time during the last eighteen years the question would not have come upon me as a shock — I saw her last night. She looked beautiful — if I may say so, sir, like a rose."

"Who?"

"Miss Diana, sir."

"You saw her?"

"Yes, sir; there was a ball at Rygon House. The valet is a friend of mine. I looked in. Miss Diana held her own. She stood out among the disputants. She excited a certain — a creditable amount of jealousy, among the right people. It was the opinion, expressed on the other side of the swing door, that she should go far. . . . Yes, sir, she is taller than her ladyship and, in a sense, fairer. I should say her hair is hardly golden, although I suspect in sunlight I should discover myself in error. Her skin is dazzling. . . . You will remember, sir, calling my attention to the skins of the women — in Munich I think it was? — And her carriage — you will perhaps remember drawing my attention to the carriage of the women in — the Andalusian women? Yes, sir, Andalusian — I think I am correct — How was she dressed, sir?"

Mr. Maitland had not asked the question.

"In white, sir. It did n't look white. I mean, if you will excuse me, there were many in white, but Miss Diana looked conspicuous. She might have been in scarlet — she showed up so — stood *out.* I have heard you use the expression with regard to the paintings of old masters. As we left Madrid, I think it was, sir, you lamented the lost art of paintrature."

"That will do, Pillar. Did her ladyship see you?"

"Her ladyship did me that honour, sir. I handed her a cup of coffee in order to make myself known, saying, 'Sugar, my lady,' if I remember rightly. Miss Diana took no refreshment. Her ladyship asked for you, sir; she thought you were not in town. I told her you had just returned from Norway."

"Thank you, Pillar; that's all."

"Miss Carston comes here, sir?"

"Yes. That's all."

Pillar took from his pocket a small red notebook, in which he began to write.

"What is it, Pillar? What are you writing?"

"Awning, sir. So far only awning. That's all."

"Why awning?"

"The usual accompaniment to a wedding, sir. It's as well to get things in hand."

II

The woman who lives alone and weeds
Forgets her own and gives to others' needs.

ELSIE CARSTON lived in the country, in the village of Bestways, and her life she ordered according to the sojournings abroad of her brother and his wife. It was for their children — she told herself and sometimes others — that she lived in the country; but she knew it was not quite true. When we deceive ourselves and know it, we are on the way to salvation. Elsie was undoubtedly on the way to salvation, — a long way on, — but she did stop on the way, now and then, to look back. She liked to feel that if she had not devoted herself to her brother's children she would have travelled. She sometimes allowed people to believe that she thirsted for deserts and longed to climb camels; but if those people had seen her in her garden fringing the skirts of the walks with thrift, and embroidering the borders with pansies and pinks, they would not have believed her anxious to leave her garden and her work. She loved Bestways. Her house was of warm red brick — Georgian, she would tell you with pride. It was old, certainly: the garden that held it in its arms — as it were, hug-

ging it — was old too, older than the house possibly. The yew hedges had been planted by people of long ago, who perhaps spoke of the day when the hedges should be grown quite high and they not there to see. There must always be in a garden that sadness. Therefore those who have a garden should also — if they may — have children, whose children will live to walk under the trees they plant.

Elsie had no children, of course; and she would have admitted it, if asked the direct question; otherwise she was inclined to look upon her brother's children as hers, and in no way would she have allowed that they belonged to her sister-in-law's brother. It was in her garden they should walk in years to come, not in his.

At one end of the village Elsie Carston lived. At the other, back from the road, in a house surrounded by a large park, with every other evidence around it of riches — quiet riches — lived Mrs. Sloane. She walked under trees that had been planted by Sloanes many years before, and in church she sat beneath monuments to Sloanes: but in the pew beside her must sit borrowed children, there being no little Sloanes. They would, by this time, have been grandchildren, if there had been. Though borrowed children are not what they should be, these would slip their little hands into Mrs. Sloane's — one from each side — just as if

they had been real grandchildren, and sit quietly, longing for the sermon to be done; and if it were longer than it should be, a little squeeze from the hand of their old friend would bid them take courage. She had been a child once and she knew! So must preachers also once have been children, yet do they think of the child to whom it is real pain to sit still? Some do.

Mrs. Sloane sat in the chancel, and sometimes into the chancel would come, during the service, a little bird. Then would the words of the preacher become winged words and would find their way into the heart of every child in the congregation. So robins as well as men may be evangelists.

Mrs. Sloane and Elsie Carston were great friends. They were both gardeners, which may make for friendship. There was between them this difference: Elsie weeded her garden because in her garden there were weeds; Mrs. Sloane weeded hers because to find a weed would have been something of an excitement — likewise a triumph. Elsie Carston planted and weeded and watered entirely oblivious to the hatred that she (aunt to Diana) had aroused in the heart of Marcus (uncle to Diana). And as she weeded and watered and planted, it was of Diana she thought, and she grudged not that far-off island its flowers and its luxurious vegetation, because it gave her Diana. She no longer found it in

her heart to bemoan the sandy soil of her garden and its unquenchable thirst.

For Diana's sake she watered the flowers as much as for their own. Diana loved flowers and Elsie stooped to pull up a weed that had dared to push its way into Diana's border. She stooped easily, much more easily than Marcus would have imagined possible. He was pleased to think of her as middle-aged and crabbed and sour and disagreeable and grasping, whereas she was thirty-six and young at that and delightful — easily amused and a friend to every one in her small world. She was expecting Diana on a long stay, so there lurked a smile at the corners of her mouth and a twinkle in her honest grey eyes. While Eustace was abroad, Diana would be hers. She was thankful Eustace had married so devoted a wife. She had known people express surprise that Lady Carston should leave her children, suggesting that however much you love your husband your children should not be neglected. Sibyl's children were not neglected, nor had they ever been. Elsie loved them. Not even a mother could feel more for them than she felt. When Dick, the boy, was small she had said to him, "I wish, Dick, you were mine — my own little boy."

"Why?" he had asked, not seeing the necessity.

"Well — because I wish you were." She had no better reason to give than this.

"But you have all the feelingship of a mother towards me," he had said; and it was true: she had. What more than the feelingship could she desire? Not even all mothers possess it. Elsie, as she watered, wondered how Diana had looked at the dance; what her mother had thought of her, what the world in general had thought of her, what any one man had thought of her. Elsie frowned, assuring herself that she wished some man to fall in love with Diana. Of course she did. The pansies at her feet knew better. They would have allowed that she was kind and strangely gentle for one so capable — but of those children, they must have admitted, she was a little jealous. She would have "thinned" the children's relations, on the other side, just as drastically as she thinned theirs on both sides of the border. On to the sterling qualities of a generous nature Elsie had grafted some of Sibyl's tenderness. "But," said Diana, "you can see where it joins"; but it *did* join — that was something; moreover, the soldering held. At twelve o'clock the second post came in and a letter was brought out to Elsie. It was from Sibyl, her sister-in-law, and she opened it thinking here was the news she had been waiting for — the date of Diana's coming. She read the letter, and re-read it.

Then she turned back and read it for the third time.

DEAREST ELSIE, — no one dearer, — you know that. Shall I make you understand what I want you most desperately to understand? I am more than grateful to you for all you have done for Diana. Every time she comes into the room Eustace is grateful. For much of what she is she is indebted to you: her frankness, her honesty are yours. Her goodness, a reflection of yours. Everything, therefore, that is best in her I acknowledge as your gift to her, to me, to her father. But, Elsie, I want her to see something of the world; I want her to have the amusement a girl of her age should have. I want her to see men so that she may choose between them. I want her to stay in London for a few months and I want to leave her with my brother. I don't think you like him? He was a dear to me when I was Diana's age and a fierce chaperon. You have never seen him. He was so long abroad. I remember you said you had heard things about him: but they may not have been true, and if they were — if he is what *you* call a man of the world — it will only make him more fiercely particular with Diana than he would otherwise have been. It is my fault that he has drifted away from me. He was always jealous of Eustace. I wonder if you will un-

derstand that? No, you are too generous a nature to understand anything so small. So, will you write to Diana and say you are pleased she should go to London? Because without that she won't stay willingly, and I want her to stay willingly. Marcus would never keep her unless she wanted to stay. That's his way. It will be so good for him to have her. Pillar, his man, says he wants something young about the house (Marcus, not Pillar). What have you to do with that? you will say. Don't say it. I want you and Marcus to be friends — I want Diana to see something of the world and the world to see something of her. There, it's out! Worldly woman that I am! You have a literary recluse at your gate (they are so dangerous when they come out). I am afraid of him. You have a muscular parson. I am afraid of him. I am afraid of all men — tinkers, tailors, soldiers and sailors, rich men, poor men, apothecaries, and thieves — they are all thieves. I am afraid of all but the right one.

YOUR DEAR EUSTACE'S WIFE

Elsie pondered over that letter — she was hurt — she was indignant — beaten — but there was one to whom she always could turn for comfort — one who always understood.

"Marcus," she called, and to her feet came slithering a black dog, and he lay on his back before

her, presenting all that was most vulnerable in his person to the tender ministrations of her wavering foot. One hind leg, to all appearances, was broken past mending. One front paw was badly damaged.

He was asking but the raking movement of his beloved physician's well-booted foot and he should be healed. How long, how long, must he wait? There were other things to be done all on a summer's day. There was a yellow cat — a stranger — not far off, that needed a lesson. There were more sparrows than there should be in a good woman's garden. They needed a fright, that was all. Low-growing gooseberries there were within the reach of the shortest-legged and best-bred spaniel. He gave up the remote chance of healing by the scraping up and down of feet, and was off in the wake of the yellow cat, flushing sparrows as he went. The brambles did for him what his mistress would not. But brambles, being self-taught scratchers, have not the firmness of touch desirable; moreover, they don't know when to leave go, or how.

"Marcus, do you hear me when I speak?" called Elsie.

"He's that obstinate, that he be," said the old gardener, who always came when any one was called, answering to any name if it were called loud enough.

He was deaf, so it was best to make sure: besides, his wife had lately died and he felt lonely if left entirely to vegetables.

"He just does it for the sake of contrariness," he went on; "at his age he did ought to know better — but he don't mean half he does — if you don't take no notice of him he'll come skeewithering back."

And skeewithering back Marcus came, and resting his head on Elsie's lap looked up into her face with that in his eyes that must forever disarm all feelings of anger, hatred, and malice against uncles — even uncles!

"Why, oh, why were you called Marcus?" she asked, and Marcus said, in his own particular manner of speech, that he had often asked himself the same question — and would now ask her.

Elsie remembered well the day Marcus had arrived — already named — in a basket. When she had opened the basket she had seen the smallest of black spaniels, and the blackest of black dogs, whose mother, judging by his neck, might have been a swan, and whose father, judging by the rest of him, the best spaniel ever bred. When she questioned the suitability of his name she discovered that he looked the wisest thing in the world — that a philosopher beside him must have lost in seriousness of demeanour. On his forehead there stood,

strongly pronounced, the bumps of benevolence — so as Sibyl had named him Marcus, Marcus he remained.

The other Marcus was then nothing more than the forgotten name of a negligible brother — the children's uncle — on the other side.

III

If a sister knows not a brother's heart he has none to know.

"DEAREST SIBYL," wrote Marcus, "why did n't you tell me you were in London and taking Diana to her first dance? I had always meant to give her a pearl necklace for her coming-out ball. I will take her, of course, while you are abroad, on one condition, and that is that she is n't always rushing off to her aunt in the country. I dislike that woman, as you know. I dislike all strong-minded, self-opinionated women. You are quite right, she is no fit companion for a girl of Diana's age. Who has a better right to Diana than I have? I can't have Miss Carston interfering. Sibyl, my dear, I am longing to see you."

Hardly had he written the words when the telephone bell rang at his elbow.

He lifted the receiver and heard Sibyl's voice telling him he was a darling old owl. In answer to his gentle reproof she said, Of course she had written to tell him she was bringing Diana to London, but she had forgotten to post the letter! Could n't he have guessed that? There was the same tenderness in the voice there had always been. She used the same absurd endearments she had always used.

He knew she must be unchanged. Might she come and see him? Now? At once? She would!

He put back the receiver — and was astonished at his emotion. The force of his feelings shocked him. He had imagined himself past caring for anything very much. His life was so easy — so well ordered — so few demands were made upon him, except for money — and those were easily met. There was nothing to disturb him — nothing to excite him — except perhaps now and then a rather bigger venture than usual in the city — which as a rule meant more money (he was lucky) with which to buy china, glass, prints, anything he liked, and to his manifold likes his room testified. His house was beautiful and the things in it were chosen for their beauty. For these things he had come to care because he had been left alone in the world. He liked to think of himself as neglected. He had felt for his sister a deep affection and she had chosen to marry and leave him.

He could n't compete for her love. He never competed. Even as a collector he had suffered from this amiable inability to assert himself. Now he deputed others less sensitive to buy for him. In his young days, before he had gone to America, he remembered at an auction losing a vase he had particularly wanted. He had allowed himself to be outbidden by a girl with wide, grey eyes — who

wore dogskin gloves. He could have outbidden her, but something had moved him to pity. Her gloves probably — they betrayed such a lack of social knowledge. It was a blue vase he would have bought. He loved the colour of it — the feel of it. She could have known nothing of the feel of it, for she held it in gloved hands, for which lack of feeling and understanding he pitied her — pitied her ignorance. She held the vase upside down to look at the mark: even about that she was undecided — or else she was short-sighted, which probability the clearness of her eyes questioned. Having examined the mark, she handed the vase back to the man from whom she had taken it and sharply bid a figure to which Marcus could have gone if he had wished. But he had not. So the vase became hers and she looked him straight in the eyes — and her eyes said "Beaten!"

"Goth!" thought Marcus as he recalled the scene. "She held the vase in gloved hands. Vandal — nice grey-eyed, clean, ignorant woman — " But he had thought of her oftener than he knew in those days, because for a certain time he had thought of her every time he had seen a woman whose eyes were not grey.

Marcus, thinking now only of his sister, walked to a mirror that hung on the wall between two windows and looked at himself anxiously. Would

she find him changed? At forty-six he was bound to look different, a little grey, of course. That did not matter, so long as she was not grey. He lit a cigarette; then put it down unsmoked, remembering that as a girl she had hated the smell of tobacco. Then he went to the window and ran up the blind; then pulled it down again halfway: not too strong a light, he decided; and pulled all the blinds down halfway. It would be kinder to Sibyl. Or should he pull them right up and face the worst? Leave her to face the light? A taxi stopped in the street below. It was absurd, but he was too nervous to go down and meet her and he counted the seconds it would take Pillar to get upstairs, to open the door. One! He must have been waiting in the hall. Supposing she were grey-haired, old, and wrinkled — or fat — ? How should he keep it from her that he was shocked, distressed, pained? The door opened and in a moment two arms were round his neck. He almost said, "Where is your mother?" — was delighted he should almost have said it; wished he had really said it. What prettier compliment could he have paid this delightful being he held in his arms?

She was still young — still brown-haired — still impulsive. He held her at arm's length — Still in love with Eustace! He could see that: no woman remains so young who is not in love.

"Marcus, Marcus, you dear funny old thing!"

"Why funny?" he asked, gently disengaging himself from her arms; "let me look at you again."

With a feeling of apprehension he knew to be absurd, he looked again, gaining courage as he looked. Had he overestimated the youthfulness of her appearance? Did not her pallor detract just a little from the radiance that had been her greatest beauty? Had he missed wrinkles? Yes, one or two — finely drawn, put in with a light hand, emphasizing only the passage of smiles — nothing more. If she had lost anything in looks she had gained much in expression. He might have left the blinds up. Her eyes were large. There were women he knew whose eyes got smaller as they grew older; that he could not have borne. Sibyl's eyes were just as they had always been. They had lost naturally something of their look of childlike questioning. That he did not mind. The childlike woman he had long ceased to admire. He read here true womanliness; a depth of real understanding, and a certain knowledge of the big things in life — things that mattered.

"Sit down," he said, and he drew her down on to the sofa beside him. "She looked like a rose, did she?"

"My Diana?"

Marcus nodded. "Pillar saw her."

"Did he say she looked like a rose? Well, then it must have been very evident."

"Not necessarily," said Marcus, unconsciously championing Pillar. Not that he altogether trusted Pillar's taste. He had shown in the Louvre, Marcus remembered, a weakness for Rubens's women. He might have admired the consummate technique of a great master while deploring a certain coarseness in his choice of subjects, but he had not done so —

"Is she pretty?" asked Marcus.

"She's rather delicious."

"When is she coming to see me?"

"At any moment, but she's a will-o'-the-wisp. She comes and goes as she wills."

"She's slight, then?"

"Oh, slight! You could pull her through a ring."

Marcus was glad of that.

"Now tell me about your dear self, Marcus."

There was so little to tell, he said.

"Not when everything interests me — Give me a cigarette."

"But you used not to —" he began, handing her his cigarette case.

"Smoke? No — but Eustace likes me to sit with him, and we smoke — you get to like it in hot climates."

"I should n't have let you smoke if you had been mine."

"No?" she laughed gently. "Dear old Marcus!"

Looking at Sibyl, and finding her so perfectly satisfying to his artistic sense, he fell to wondering what Diana was really like. And whom she was like? He dared not ask. He had no wish to hear she was like her father. She could not be like her mother or the papers would be bound to have got hold of it. He was glad they had n't — but still girls far less pretty *were* advertised.

"I'm so glad," said Sibyl; "it shows you won't let Diana."

"Smoke? No, certainly not."

"You don't know Diana — I must tell you about her — a little about her, without saying she is like her father, is that it?" She laughed — how gay she was! When she had told him that little, omitting that much, she asked: "Does she sound nice?" And Marcus, smiling, said she sounded delicious.

"She is."

Marcus laughed; this was the old Sibyl back again, with all her enthusiasms, the same charming companion she had been as a girl. Because of that charm of hers, he liked to think, he had not married.

"Sibyl, is she like you?" he asked impatiently.

"Yes."

He breathed again.

"And I so wanted her to be like her father," she added.

"I suppose so — Is his sister — the one you call Elsie — married?"

"No."

"You said she had no children —"

"She has n't."

"But naturally. It was hardly necessary to say it, was it?"

And Sibyl laughed. Marcus needed just what she was going to give him, a disturbing young thing to live with him. Marcus dreaded it, although he would not have said so because of that sister he so disliked, who wanted Diana.

"I won't have Diana running off whenever Miss Carston chooses to send for her. That I think you understand."

"But there will be times when you will want to get rid of her. You won't want to give up travelling, will you?"

"Could n't she come with me?"

"You can't conceive, dear, the trouble a woman is travelling. You would hate to have to think of some one else — another place to find in a crowded train — another person's luggage to look after — another ticket to lose — you would hate it."

"Then I shan't travel."

"But surely it would be easier to send Diana to Elsie than to do that."

"I detest that woman —"

"She has — nice eyes. You are a dear old thing, Marcus, and not a bit changed."

"I never change."

Marcus waited all day. Diana did not come. He was disappointed. It showed a want of reverence for the older on the part of the younger generation. At last he went to bed with a volume of Rabelais to read (in order to keep up his French). He read until he grew sleepy. He put out the light and slept until a flash of light awoke him and he wondered — What was this thing sitting on the end of his bed in white — a being so slim and so exquisite!

"Darling! the same old Marcus," the being exclaimed, — "so sleepy and I woke him up. I could n't wait to see him — such years since we met!"

"Sibyl!" he murmured.

"Not this time, it's Diana — is she like Sibyl? I am so glad — well, darling, talk!"

The slim being sat on his bed and sticking out her feet, on which twin shoe-buckles twinkled, urged him to amuse her. He dreaded "This little pig went to market" played through the bedclothes. He saw Diana eyeing the spot where she must know his toes were bound to be.

"How did you get here?" he asked.

"Pillar opened wide the portal and we walked in. He was n't in the least surprised."

"Not surprised?"

"Not in the least. He said we might turn up the carpet and dance — if we liked. He offered us a gramaphone — his own — to dance to."

"My dear Diana, you ought to be in bed."

"Ought? Why?"

"It's time."

"What is he reading?" She put out her hand. He seized the book.

"A bedside classic, is it?"

He put it under his pillow.

"You look nice in bed," she said softly, "but not a bit what I expected."

"I am not what I was, of course," he said hastily.

"Are you a Once Was? Poor darling — does it hurt? Do you like my frock?"

He said he liked it — enormously.

"And my shoes?"

He nodded.

"Mother says I get my slim feet from you."

"Oh, does she? Do go home, my child. How are you going home?"

"Where are your slippers?" She dived down.

"You've kicked them under the bed," he moaned; "they *were* there."

"I never touched them; here they are!" She slipped her feet into them; huge, red morocco slip-

pers they were. Pillar would have remembered where they had been bought, the day on which they had been bought, and what kind of a woman she was who had passed at the moment of buying. They must have been the only size left in the bazaar. Diana sat on the edge of the bed again and put out her feet, the slippers swinging like pendulums from the tips of her toes. "Mummy must retract her words — she spoke in her haste — Marcus, my Once Was, I've been dancing — did you ever dance?"

"Dear child, do go, who is taking you home?"

"Six people. Pillar is taking care of them downstairs — Well, if you insist, I suppose I must. I shall love to stay with you. You don't mind my coming like this — do you? Look at me! D' you like me?"

She was exactly — in theory — what Marcus would have liked another man's niece to be, slight, graceful, with just that amount of assurance he found right in woman; but one does not always want one's theories to live with one.

When he awoke a few hours later, he was firmly convinced he had dreamed and had dreamed pleasantly enough, and he closed his eyes to dream again; but the dream had vanished. Pillar remained. He brought him his tea, pulled up the blinds, put his things in order, stooped and picked up from the

floor something that sparkled and laid it down on the dressing-table.

When he had gone Marcus jumped out of bed, went to the dressing-table and saw lying upon it a small stone of glittering paste. He had not dreamed then. He was glad — in a way. Diana would be a disturbing element in a quiet life — distracting, perhaps, rather than disturbing.

IV

A mother may laugh with a master; she goes and the joke goes with her: the boy stays behind.

SIBYL CARSTON, having arranged things entirely to her satisfaction, straightway made preparations to join her husband in that far-off dependency. The preparations were quickly made. She went down to see Dick at school: walked with him through cool cloisters, out into the sun; paced close-shaven lawns; drank in the beauty of it all and expressed a hope that it was sinking into the soul of her son.

"Oh, rather," said the son, a little surprised that his soul should be discussed. He realized the occasion was a special one, otherwise it was the sort of thing you did n't talk about. It was there all right, his soul, he supposed. It stirred to the sound of beautiful music; also when he read in history of deeds of valour! — you bet it did — at the greatness of England in general; at the left-hand bowling of one master in particular. It was all there, but he did n't want to talk about it.

"I understand, darling," said his mother, "but don't stifle it."

He would n't, rather not. "But, I say, what's

this about Diana and this London business and Aunt Elsie? Rough on her, is n't it?"

"No, darling, I don't think so. I want Diana to have some fun."

"There's lots at Aunt Elsie's. There are the dogs, they're good fun, and the rabbits, and the farm. There's always something to do there. Aunt Elsie is jolly good fun, is n't she?"

"So is Uncle Marcus."

"Is he?" This doubtfully.

"He's my brother, darling."

"Oh, I see. I suppose you are bound in a kind of way to think him funny then — you like him in a way."

"Very much."

"Aunt Elsie does n't."

"She has never seen him."

"She jolly well does n't want to either."

"Dick, darling, you will take care of Diana, won't you?" said his mother, changing the subject: it was so difficult to keep to any subject with the good-bye looming in the near distance.

Any one who says good-bye to the child she loves for a long time (and a year to a mother is an eternity) drinks deep of the cup of self-sacrifice. Sibyl's one thought was that Dick should not know what she was suffering. Of course he knew: but if it were her business — as mother — to bridge the distance

across the sea, to talk of the near days when they should be together again, it was his — as son — to pretend he believed her. He assured her it was no distance: he did n't mind: it happened to lots of boys: it was all right.

"You will take care of Diana?" she repeated — readjusting the distance.

"Yes, rather; you don't want her to marry while you're away, I suppose? — because I don't quite see how I should manage that."

"I don't want her to marry while I'm away, of course, although I hope she may some day."

"Taboret Major admires her so, I thought I would just ask."

"He would be young to marry, would n't he?"

"Well, so would she — anyway, he would n't like me to talk about his private affairs, so don't say anything about it. And, I say, if you do see him, I think you'd better not speak to him at all; he does n't like people speaking to him. He's going to be a great writer — he thinks."

Sibyl promised she would n't speak to Taboret Major, but Mr. Wane she must see. Mr. Wane was Dick's house-master, and Dick allowed he was very fairly decent. But Dick had started early in life with prejudices against masters and it was difficult to overcome them. When he had come back from his first term at a private school, he had resented

with the whole force of his small being the injustice of being given a holiday task. Until he had got home he had n't known the beastly thing had come with him. The perfidy of the master had embittered him. "How could he have wished me a happy holiday when he knew all the time that he had given me this beastly thing to do?" he had asked.

It was a difficult question to answer. Masters must answer it for themselves — at that day when they too must answer questions: not only ask them.

"Oh, yes, you must see old Wane," Dick admitted.

"We will walk about a little first — and talk — there is so much to say — is n't there?" said his mother.

Dick nodded: she tightened the pressure of her arm on his, and it spoke volumes. He kicked at the little pebbles in the path, anything seemed to help. "How high do you suppose that tree is?" he asked. "It's awfully old."

The sun was in his mother's eyes, she could n't see. Neither could he, but he knew; it was sixty feet high, so it was n't quite a fair question, was it?

"Not quite fair, my Dick."

So much was n't quite fair.

If you can't talk you can always eat an ice, at least you can if you are a boy. Sibyl suggested it. "Good business," said Dick.

The ice was a help — a still greater help, two ices. They seemed to help the swallowing part of the business and good-byes largely consist of that. Then Sibyl went to see Mr. Wane and Dick waited outside — hoping she would n't do anything funny — or try to make the old man laugh. If Sibyl had been, as a mother, a little less pretty and charming, it is possible Dick would have been — as a boy — a little less forward for his age, and might have been possessed of a character that was less surprising in its strength to his house-master. It is possible.

Mr. Wane was a just man and honourable, but perhaps, to convince himself that Dick's mother had dimples, he may have emphasized a little more than he need have done certain things that had been "curiously brought to his notice" about Dick. A certain sterling honesty of purpose — unusual in so young a boy — Yes, they were there! Two of them, one on each side of her mouth. A very pretty mouth — a mouth that told of a certain fastidiousness of character that appealed to Mr. Wane. He only needed to give one or two instances, which bore out what he had said about Dick's character, and a depth he had suspected, in the eyes of Dick's mother, he found and fathomed.

"Show me a boy's mother!" he was wont to say.

Dick had shown him a pretty mother, and had waited patiently outside while she talked about

him! At last she joined him. Old Wane came out with her and he was laughing, but he seemed all right, *otherwise.*

Dick and his mother walked back through the cool cloisters, out into the sun and over close-shaven lawns. "Point out to your mother," Mr. Wane had said, "architectural features of interest, my boy!" And Dick proceeded to do it. "That gate, see? It was built — I don't know when — in the year, I don't know what — by — I don't know who," — and his mother was duly impressed. To pay for this knowledge and other things there must be spent years in hot climates. Money must be saved so that when Dick was grown to be a man he should look back to this time as the happiest in his life. If all this and the sense of its past should sink into his soul, it must help to make him one of England's proudest sons.

At the railway station they parted, and Sibyl watched till she could no longer see her small pink-faced son, who was growing, for all his smallness — so big, so tall, so reserved.

After Dick's mother had left him, an uncomfortable way all visiting mothers have, Dick, unconscious of that curious nobility of character that Mr. Wane, somewhat to his own surprise, had endowed him with, felt very lonely. He hated islands, beastly far-off islands, rotten places for mothers to

go to — what was the matter with England? He asked Taboret Major, and Taboret Major said, "Nothing, absolutely nothing — England was all right." And he and Dick walked down to the cricket fields (their England) and it was all right.

Mrs. Wane, who had lately been brought to bed of her third son, was propped up on her pillows and Mr. Wane was sitting beside her. That he had something on his mind she knew. Mothers always upset him: they upset boys too; being altogether upsetting things.

"He *is* a very nice boy — a *very* nice boy — a *particularly* nice boy, I should say," he said thoughtfully.

He had said it three times, so Mrs. Wane put out her hand and closing it on his said — "Was she so very charming and attractive?" And Mr. Wane laughed, for in spite of what Dick knew to the contrary, "old Wane" could see a joke, and that joke against himself.

"You dear!" he said to his wife, and she answered: "He *is* a nice boy — a *very* nice boy — a *particularly* nice boy — and there's another just as nice — and you might tell his mother so without its causing you any after pricks of conscience, or remorse." And she looked towards the cradle in which slept profoundly Wane Minimus.

"He's very good and quiet," admitted his father.

"He knows, perhaps," said his mother, "that his father is one from whom it is supposed the secrets of no small boy can be hid. By instinct he knows that: later on I shall tell him that he need not be quite so good, or so quiet; that although as a schoolmaster it is your bounden duty to know the secrets of all small schoolboys, as a father you are just as blind — and just as weak as any other well-dispositioned father. It is in order to make schoolmasters human that mothers marry them — there could be no other reason. Now tell me all about Carston's mother and just what it was you said to her about him?"

That night, as Mr. Wane undressed, he was still a little uneasy.

"He is a *particularly* nice boy," he murmured; but this it was that rankled — Barker's mother had been down, too, and Barker was a particularly nice boy — he had faults, of course, so had Dick — but he had told Barker's mother of Barker's faults. He had not spared her: nor had he cared whether she had dimples or not — perhaps because she had not.

Before he got into bed he thanked God for the inestimable gift of a good wife — and he meant it; and of an understanding wife — he meant that too; and of a beautiful wife — he meant that too — in the highest sense.

V

If my sister have a child then am I straightway an uncle, and who shall save me?

WHEN Diana took up her abode in the house of her uncle, she arrived late, dressed, and went out again to dinner. That was not how Marcus would have had her arrive. She must understand that order was the keynote of his establishment. How otherwise could he expect to keep so excellent a housekeeper as Mrs. Oven? Pillar, too, must be considered. She must state definitely when she would be in to dinner and when not.

"I was not," she said later, when taxed, "definitely not."

Marcus dined alone. As he came downstairs dressed for dinner, he met a housemaid going up, with a glass of milk on a tray. On the tray there was also a plate, on the plate there was a banana, and beside the banana lay glistening a halfpenny bun. The meal of some one's particular choosing, he should say. In no other way could it have found its way upstairs in his house. But whose meal was it?

That he had two housemaids he knew. He saw evidence of their being in the brightness of the

brasses, the polish of the furniture, but he hardly knew them apart. The bun-bearer was one of them. He went on his way deploring that in his house there was no back staircase. But for whom could a vagrant banana be?

Tentatively he put the question to Pillar, as ashamed to ask it as Pillar was to answer it. Pillar murmured something about a mischance, and Mr. Maitland was quick to admit it. It was certainly an accident meeting the banana on the stairs; but the meal itself remained unexplained, and inexcused; it must have been predestined. Then it struck him that Diana must have brought a maid. It was quite right she should. He might have guessed it. But a maid who lived on buns and bananas, could she be efficient?

Marcus dined uncomfortably. The dinner seemed less good than usual. Gradually it was borne in upon him that it must be Mrs. Oven who was in bed and who was feeding on buns and bananas. She had lost her taste, her sense, her gastronomic taste — her sense of taste. Everything!

Towards twelve o'clock Diana came in, unrepentant and delightful; she floated in, as it were, on a cloud of tulle, a veritable will-o'-the-wisp, a thing as light as gossamer, as elusive as a firefly. She had a great deal to tell Marcus and told him none of it. She was lost in the depth of his huge sofa — she

looked like drifted snow — blown there by the wind. He did n't tell her that, even if he thought it. What he did tell her was that he expected his guests to go to bed early. This in obedience to an instinct that told him to begin as he meant to go on —

Diana said she could not go to bed early — that night, at all events. She would go as early as she could — as early in the morning. "I have a confession to make. Shall I make it now or wait till to-morrow? In ten minutes it will be to-morrow. To-morrow never used to come so soon."

"Why not now?"

"No, I could not sleep unforgiven."

"But why should you? What if I forgave you?"

Horrible thoughts flashed through Marcus's mind. What could she have to confess? Happier thoughts — what could there be that he would not forgive? forgive her? There were things he could not forgive a man. All the things he had heard of modern girls and their ways passed through his mind, all the things he had ever heard of men from the days of man's innocency until now. Then he looked at Diana. The modern girl was all right; she was delicious. But men — men? Would they find Diana distracting? Or was it because he was no longer young that her youth seemed so appealing, her freshness, her gaiety so infectious? He had always felt he could never have made a successful

or even a comfortably happy father. A creature like this he could never have let out of his sight: all men would have become his enemies by very reason of their existence.

"Once Was," said Diana softly, "why so dreamy? You make me sleepy. Good-morning!"

She went to bed, unconfessed, unforgiven. Pillar put out the lights downstairs. Marcus put them out on his landing. Above that it was Diana's business. "Don't forget the lights, Diana," he called.

At one o'clock in the morning Diana was singing in her bath and Marcus lay in bed wondering what it was she wanted to confess. He fell asleep uncertain whether he liked a niece in the house or not. He had pictured to himself a quiet, mousey niece, demure and obedient! But how charming she had looked on the sofa! — she got her feet from him, did she? A great attraction in women, pretty feet; and none too common. He must see that she gave enough for her boots. It was where some women economized. He shuddered to think of women out in the street, on muddy days, in house shoes. Horrible!

Diana came down to breakfast. That was to her credit. To bed late: yet up early. She looked delicious: not in the least tired and very fresh and clean. A girl may be both without looking triumphantly so, as Diana did.

After breakfast with Marcus was a sacred hour, dedicated to his newspapers and his pipe, yet after breakfast Diana planted herself on the edge of his chair and proceeded to get to know him. Not until she had done that, she said, could she make her confession.

"What is it?" he asked, ready to forgive anything, if only that he might be left in peace.

"I brought Shan't with me; do you mind?"

"A maid?" he said. "A dyspeptic maid," he added to himself.

"Well, she's female — certainly — I'll say that for her."

Marcus would have allowed that himself — in spite of her addiction to zoölogical fare.

"She's such a willing little beast. She won't eat if I go away — so I had to bring her — see, my Once Was?"

"Oh, a dog? My dear Diana, of course, I can't have it upstairs, but Pillar will be delighted to exercise the little beast — "

No dog explained the banana and the milk, but he said nothing.

"Dear child!" — he was feeling very fond of Diana — "I should like to see — whatever you call it — is it trained and — "

"Shan't! Shan't!" called Diana up the stairs. "Come! Hurry up!"

"It was a funny way to talk to a dog," thought Marcus. If at that moment he had looked up from his paper he would certainly have thought it a funny dog that walked into the dining-room. "Well?"

Marcus turned in answer to the interrogation and beheld a small girl of four or five, standing, beaming at him, the very quintessence of willingness and loving-kindness. "We-ell?" she repeated.

There are those in life who carry the mackintoshes of others; who leave the last fresh egg for others; the early peas for others; the first asparagus for others; who look up trains for others; find servants for others; houses for others; who cry with others; who laugh with others. They are as a rule spinsters who do these things and they do them gladly — even the crying. Yes! Shan't-if-I-don't-want-to, Shan't for short, was a spinster, and Marcus recognized her as one of those born to do things for others. She could laugh and cry at the same time, run faster than any child of her age to do your bidding. She could soothe your pain with her smile: and touch your heart with her laugh. These things Marcus did not as yet know. But he was glad directly he saw her that she was not a dog, and he grudged her neither the milk, nor the bun, nor the banana, nor the distracting of Mrs. Oven from the cooking of his dinner, which said much for the fascination of Shan't.

There she stood longing to do things, aching, benevolence beaming from her eyes. "Well?" she repeated.

"Good gracious!" said Marcus, and he got up and stood looking down with amazement on this small person, who stood so willingly waiting. Suddenly she looked at his feet and like a flash she was gone.

"Who in the world is it, Diana?" he asked sternly, but his heart had become as water, and his bones like wax. Here was the child of his dreams, the child he had played Hide-and-Seek with, told his longest stories to, taken to the Zoo, saved from drowning.

"That 's Shan't-if-I-don't-want-to! That's one of her names, but she always does want to. She's the jolliest little beggar in the world. Mummy says I can't have her for my own, but she is my own and I am hers. Here she is. She is bound to have fetched something for you. For Heaven's sake, say 'Thank you.'"

She had fetched his slippers. Now Marcus Maitland would rather go without breakfast than breakfast in slippers, but he said, "Tha-ank you."

"Now," said Diana, "if by chance I ruffled your hair she'd be off for your hair-brushes before you knew where you were."

"I don't know where I am, as it is," said Marcus,

edging away from the devastating hands of Diana. He loathed his hair ruffled.

"Put on your slippers," said Shan't, pointing to his feet.

"But I have only just put on my boots."

"Put — them — on and don't — argue," said Shan't.

"But — "

"Pe — lease!" Shan't looked at him, and Marcus, feeling about as determined as a worm can feel under the steady pressure of a garden-roller, stooped down and began to unlace his boots. To do it properly he must have a button-hook. Could Shan't know to what an exquisite discomfort she was putting him?

"No," said Diana, "you need n't. No, Shan't, you can fetch something else."

"No, sit down, Shan't," commanded her uncle. "I want to look at you."

She sat down on a footstool, folded her hands and looked up at her uncle. "Funny old fing!" she said, wrinkling her nose; "you did n't know I was coming, did you?"

Marcus said he had had no idea.

"Diana said you did n't."

"Say your poem, Shan't," said Diana. "It's her own — her very own," she added. "Go on, Shan't."

"I forget it."

"How can you forget it when it's your own?"

"Well, I have."

"Shan't — One-two-three."

Marcus knew it to be the fashion among poets to read their own works. He wondered if they needed treatment as drastic as this, or if they did it more willingly? In the cause of charity perhaps they did.

"One — two — three," said Diana sternly, and Shan't began:

"Swing me higher,
Oh, Delia, oh, Delia!
Swing me over the garden wall —
Only do not let me fall.

"Found in the garden
Dead in her beauty.
Was she not a dainty dish
To set before the king?"

All this very, very fast, and at the end of it Shan't, pink and breathless, as any poet should be after being called upon to recite his own poem half an hour after breakfast.

"Does your aunt know you're here?" asked Marcus.

"She does — *now*," said Shan't seriously.

"How did you get away without being seen?" Marcus thought that no well-brought-up child could ever escape from its Nannies and nursery-

maids. The safety of England depended on the safeguarding of her children. He had heard that said, and he knew there were societies to enforce it because he had subscribed to them.

Up sprang Shan't, the better to tell her story. A dramatic sense was hers. "I ran down the back stairs — and I ran down the drive — and I ran down the garden — and I ran froo the gates — and I ran down the road and I ran over the beridge. And then I did n't run any — more. I just waited for Diana — and we came."

A deep sigh followed this statement. The air escaping from an air cushion was the only thing Marcus could think of that compared with the exhaustiveness of the sigh. At that moment Pillar brought a telegram and Mr. Maitland opened it. Pillar glanced quickly at the child and Shan't's smile proclaimed him her friend. He was on her side.

"Diana, it is from your aunt," said Marcus; "she says, 'Return Shan't at once'!"

"No," said Shan't; "shan't if I don't want to." And she was off and out of the room, out of the front door, opened by the telegraph boy, who boy-like was always as ready to let anything out as he was to catch and cage anything, through the door into the street: across the road and into the square through the garden gate that stood ajar.

"Let her run!" called Diana to her vanishing uncle; "she'll soon tire." But Marcus had gone in eager pursuit. He crossed the street, was through the gate and on to Shan't before she had gone many yards down the straight path that ran through the square. He caught her in his arms. "By Jove, how she wriggles!" There was imminent danger of the uncle being left with the clothes of Shan't in his arms, and no Shan't. Appreciating the danger he relaxed his hold. Off she went, but to be caught again, and easily enough. She was hot. He could feel her heart beating in her small body, as a bird might flutter against the bars of the cage that imprisons it. She was such a little thing. "Shan't," he said, "come here." He drew her towards him; he sat down and lifted her on to his knee.

"Shan't if I don't want to!" she whispered.

"But you're going to want to."

"Always do — mostly always do," she said, crying softly; not really crying, she assured him, smiling.

"Look here," said her uncle, "d' you know what you are?"

"Lucky little devil," she hazarded.

"Well — but seriously — a good little girl — and such a willing little beggar, is n't that it?"

She nodded. "Always — mostly always."

"Look here — willing little beggars always do what they are asked and Aunt" — Marcus paused — "Aunt — what do you call her?"

"Elsie — only-aunt-in-the-world."

"There are others, of course," said Marcus stiffly; "Aunt Elsie — "

"Only-aunt-in-the-world," said Shan't; "say it!" She laid a finger on his lips.

"Well, Aunt Elsie-only-aunt-in-the-world wants you to go back to her because she's lonely."

"She's got free dogs!"

"Free?"

"One — two — free — " "Free" found the tip of Shan't's forefinger lightly laid on the tip of Marcus's nose.

"Yes; but she wants you — and if you are a good little girl and go back you shall come again and stay — "

"When?"

"We might say Christmas-time."

"When else?"

" — Easter, perhaps."

"We have eggs at Easter," — this softly reminiscent.

"You shall have eggs here."

"What inside of them?"

"Oh — little presents."

"What little presents? Whistles?"

"Yes, I dare say."

"And knives?"

"I should n't be surprised."

"Why would n't you?"

"Because I should know."

"What would you know?"

"Well, about the knives."

"Would you guess?"

"I expect so."

"I've thought of something — No, *you* do!"

"*I* think of something?"

"Yes. Have you?"

"Yes."

" Is it animal, vegeble, or amiable? "

"It's animal."

"Is it in this room?"

Marcus gently pointed out that they were not in a room, and Shan't pointed out less gently that he was n't playing properly. Marcus had had very serious thoughts as to whether he should allow Shan't's version of animal, vegetable, or mineral to pass unquestioned, or whether he should tell her she was n't playing the game?

"Is it the poker?" asked Shan't.

"A poker is n't animal."

"Then you should have said it was amiable — that's what pokers are. I did guess quickly, did n't I?"

At this moment Diana joined them, and the inhabitants of the square garden saw the unusual sight of that rather unfriendly Mr. Maitland sitting on a garden seat, with a child on his knee, while a girl, a very attractive girl, stood by, egging him on as it were.

"She's going back to Aunt Elsie, Diana," he said.

"Only-aunt-in-the-world — Say it," said Shan't.

He said it, repeating, "She's going back."

"Shan't if I don't want to."

"But you will, Shan't," said Diana, "because — look at me!"

Shan't threw back her head and looked at Diana.

"Because *I* — *want* you to," said Diana.

Shan't slipped off her uncle's knee, ran across the grass, over the road, in at the hall door, at which Pillar was standing, into the dining-room, and laid her head on a chair and sobbed.

"Poor little beggar," said Diana.

"Diana, shall I?" He was longing to comfort her.

"No, you'll spoil it all. You can't give in now — if you say a child must do a thing, make her do it. You have lost your chance."

As one convicted of a crime Marcus returned to the dining-room. When Pillar came into the room he looked at Mr. Maitland as he had never looked at him before — looked as if he were saying: "A

little sunshine comes into the house and you shut it out — you draw down the blinds!"

It fell to the lot of Mrs. Oven to take Miss Shan't back to her aunt. She called her Miss Charlotte, thinking Shan't was but the correct way of pronouncing Charlotte. She had lived with a Lady Harriet who had been very particular to pronounce her name curiously, and Mrs. Oven recognized a distinction attached to curiously pronounced names and respected those who knew how to pronounce them.

"You see, Diana," explained her uncle, "I am delighted to have you, but two extra in the house do make a difference, especially when the second one is a child. There are the servants to consider, and besides there is your aunt — "

Diana said Aunt Elsie would never let him have Shan't, so he need n't worry.

"My dear Diana, your aunt has not the power to prevent me from having Shan't if I wish to — "

"You *will* wish to. The day will come when you will find you can't live without her. I can't imagine what I shall do without her, but I quite see you can't have two of us — it's too darling of you to have me, and Aunt Elsie must be considered."

"With your Aunt Elsie I have nothing whatever to do. I owe her no consideration. I don't know her — "

"All right, darling, don't be flurried. She does n't want to know you. She dislikes you quite amazingly."

"Why should she?" asked Marcus, finding the unreasonableness of women difficult to understand.

That evening Mr. Maitland offered Pillar Zoo tickets for Sunday.

"No, thank you, sir; I would not deprive another more fitted — "

"There's a new baby giraffe." This was an attraction never before known to fail in its lure.

"Oh, well, sir, at the Zoölogical Gardens one's mind harks back, as it were, to children. It's better not to think of children when you're in a house where there are none, and none to come — so to speak."

The next day Marcus got a letter from the only aunt in the world and the letter ran as follows:

DEAR MR. MAITLAND, — I think it should be clearly understood before we go any further that I have as much right to my brother's children as you have to the children of your sister. I do not wish to stand in Diana's way and I am delighted she should have such a chance as you are giving her, but Shan't is mine. Her mother did not leave her in your charge. She left her in mine. She is a most charm-

ing companion, but would be utterly lost upon a bachelor — as you appear to be — living in London.

If, however, at any time you should agree to lend me Diana for a week, I will lend you Shan't. But it must be quite clearly understood that you do not have both together, at any time. If the two sisters should wish to be together, and it is only natural they should, I think their mother would say the place for them to be together is here. You are not likely to appreciate the extraordinary character of Shan't, and it is quite possible the child would wear herself out as your slave. With Diana there is no such danger. You will find her delightful, but the slaving must be on your side. Shan't has just returned safely, so far as I can see none the worse for her adventure. I must thank you for sending her back in the care of so respectable and excellent a woman. Shan't has a name, by the way: it is Elsie; you must have known it.

Yours truly,

ELSIE CARSTON

"A most disagreeable letter," said Marcus as he folded it and put it into his pocket, to re-read later. "A most uncalled-for letter. I sent the child back at once. Most men would have kept her."

He began then and there to wonder why he had not kept her. Talk of dogs! (Miss Carston was de-

voted to dogs, it seemed.) What dog had ever attracted him as Shan't had done? What dog had ever looked so willing? Not even a retriever was so humbly anxious to do anything in the world to please. She was such a jolly little thing to hold — so small — so easily crushed — funny, jolly little thing! Why should Miss Carston have her? Under the care of Miss Carston she would grow up a suffragette; would grow up everything a man would wish a girl not to be; self-opinionated, strong-minded, argumentative; always right, never wrong. It was a horrible thought. And Pillar had been perfectly willing that Shan't should stay. If Pillar did n't mind, who should?

It was only right that Diana and Shan't should not be separated. Miss Carston could have Dick in the holidays. That should satisfy her. If anything could satisfy a nature so exacting!

VI

A man may win; the woman keeps the winnings.

SO far Elsie had won — so she thought. She had got Shan't back, but Shan't, with the glamour of London upon her, was restless, longing to talk, aching to tell all she had seen and heard in London — "darlin' old London." But Aunt Elsie was obdurate. She did not want to hear anything about Uncle Marcus, and London was Uncle Marcus just as Uncle Marcus was London. She wanted to know what Shan't had remembered of her Bible lesson? What she had remembered about Zacharias? She had learnt all about him just before she had gone to London!

"*Did* I?" asked Shan't, doubting, but open to conviction.

Before Aunt Elsie, as a prisoner before the judge, she stood. She made one or two manœuvres, the first to make Aunt Elsie smile; the next to distract her attention. But Aunt Elsie neither smiled nor allowed her attention to be distracted. "Tell me what you remember about Zacharias," she said.

Shan't sighed. It was no good. "Zacha-ri-as?" she pondered. She stood first on one leg, then on the other. What *did* she remember? Raising pel-

lucid eyes to Aunt Elsie, and higher still to Heaven, she began, "Zacharias was — a just man and he stood before the altar of the Lord — and — an angel came to him and said, 'Zacharias, you are goin' to have a baby,' and Zacharias said, 'I am not,' and the angel said, 'I beg your pardon, you are, and what's more you'll be dumb till you get it — ' That's all," said Shan't.

"You know that was n't what you learnt, Shan't."

"Was n't it?" she said surprised; then added, "It's a pity, is n't it?" She looked at her Aunt Elsie, and Aunt Elsie saw with relief Mrs. Sloane coming towards her. She had never loved her neighbour better, and she had always loved her well.

As she walked along Mrs. Sloane bowed to those flowers she knew by sight, recognized and spoke to those she personally knew, and exclaimed she had never met another. A garden-lover was she in another woman's garden. A generous visitor! There was nothing that grew in her garden better than in Elsie's. She never said: "Ah, yes, of course, the same thing exactly, but mine are deeper — richer in colour; a matter of soil, of course. That only three inches high! Why, mine grew that in one night — a much better night, of course. It's only a question of — "

Mrs. Sloane never said the wrong thing in the gardens of others. She was dearly loved in consequence, and every gardener felt in her presence a better gardener than he really was — just as every man felt a better man. And that, after all, is a good woman's work in life, to make men feel better than they are — for by the time they grow accustomed to the feeling and get over the shyness it entails, they find it has become a habit and they are better.

It could be truthfully said of Mrs. Sloane, as was said of somebody by somebody — that whatever her age she did n't look it. The tribute savours of the wit and understanding of Sidney Smith, whose judgment on the matter of babies is almost as well known as Solomon's. Mrs. Sloane was triumphantly young, although to Shan't she was a very, very old lady; but Shan't was too young to recognize youth when she met it in the guise of old age.

Across the lawn, to the rescue of Aunt Elsie, came Mrs. Sloane. She wore a mushroom hat and gardening gloves and used a spud as walking-stick. "How goes the war?" she asked.

"You may go, Shan't," said Aunt Elsie.

"You got her back, then? With or without difficulty?"

"You may go, Shan't."

"I came back with Mrs. Oven," said Shan't, swinging her leg, reluctant to go.

"Shan't, you may go."

At that moment Shan't would rather have turned head over heels. She would have found it easier.

"Run along, darling."

"Must I?"

"Must she?" asked Mrs. Sloane.

Shan't edged nearer, leant up against Mrs. Sloane, who slipped an arm round her. "Did you have a nice time?" she whispered.

"Diana 's got b-blue silk curtains on her bed."

"Has she? Is she very happy?"

Shan't nodded. "I watched her dress. Then I went downstairs — and Uncle Marcus did n't know I was comin' — he *was* surprised — "

"Run along, Shan't; you must do what I tell you, whatever you did with your uncle — "

Shan't walked away backwards, stopped to seize Marcus, clutched at every excuse to linger — every daisy became a valid excuse —

"This is what comes of going to London," said Aunt Elsie; "I knew what it would be."

Shan't walked away trailing her feet as she went, stubbing the toes of her shoes into the ground — disgusted with life. No one ran after her — made much of her and begged her to be good when she

was good all the time. She had liked Pillar! He had "amoozed" her. She had liked Mrs. Oven! London! everything! Moreover, Diana was there — Diana, whom she adored; life without her was dull. Shan't wished it was tea-time.

"Now tell me," said Mrs. Sloane to Elsie.

"There is nothing to tell. Shan't went with Diana. It was very wrong of Diana. The child, of course, was n't to blame. I wired for her and he sent her back at once, in the care of a most excellent woman. She looked a good cook — you can tell, can't you?"

"At a glance, just as easily as you can tell a good coachman — or, for the matter of that, a good clergyman — "

"Talking of clergymen — " And Elsie unburdened her heart about Shan't and Zacharias.

"Dear Zacharias!" said Mrs. Sloane; "I wonder if he had a sense of humour." This was beside the point, so Elsie brought her back to the odious uncle, who obviously had none. What should she do? It was evident he had designs upon the children, he might even kidnap them. She did n't trust him a yard. Mrs. Sloane suggested counter-attractions. Sparks lit in the eyes of the harassed aunt. What distraction could the country offer that could compare with the attraction of London?

"There is no reason a dance should not be given

when you want Diana back — a dance in the country is very delightful, so long as it be sufficiently well done, and the right people come, and the right band plays, and the bright moon shines."

"Who would give one? — you would n't?" This was a bow at a venture.

"And why not in so good a cause?"

"You are an angel."

"It is not the first time I have been told so when I have but done my most obvious duty against my neighbour's enemy."

"There is no one like you."

"There is much to be thankful for. By the way, does Mr. Watkins come and doze these days in your garden?"

Mr. Watkins, the literary recluse, of whom Lady Carston was afraid, had taken to sitting in Miss Carston's garden. He found he could write better, read better, and dream better there than anywhere. The peace of it all he found wonderfully soothing. The clatter of the milk-pails at the farm distracted him: the lowing of the cows depressed him (it made him feel the bitterness of his loneliness): the squealings of the pigs were too suggestive: the cackling of hens reminded him of women he had known and would fain forget.

"He must enjoy these lovely days," said Mrs. Sloane slyly.

Elsie said he had not been for some time. She supposed he was busy.

"And Mr. Pease, the curate? His rooms were so stuffy, he said; did n't he? Does he come? I suppose so?"

No, Elsie was bound to admit that the curate had not been for some time. She supposed he, too, was busy.

And Mrs. Sloane went on her way smiling. "Diana! Diana!" she said to herself, "oh, to be young again! How you must enjoy it all!" She stopped. "Well, well, my dear! I never expected to see you rioting like this. Why are you so shy in some gardens? What's this about not growing unless you are put in a draughty place?" And she lifted a trail of Tropæolum and put it on its right way.

Just outside Elsie's gate Mrs. Sloane met Mr. Watkins. "You are coming in?" — and she held the gate open.

"Not to-day, I think," said the weary Mr. Watkins, adding something about his soul's solitude, — "not to-day!"

"You should not keep all your beautiful thoughts to yourself," said Mrs. Sloane. It was perhaps an unfortunate remark, because Mr. Watkins hastened to inform her that for two and sixpence, postage paid, she could read his latest and best — whatever the critics might choose to say.

"Yes, yes, of course," said Mrs. Sloane, "but I am sure you have thoughts that are too beautiful to be put into words, on paper! They may pass from true friend to true friend — in the quiet of a friend's garden. Among the flowers words may be spoken that printer's ink would blur."

Now Mr. Watkins felt that this dear old lady was trying to encroach upon his garden of thought, to wander down the paths of beautiful thoughts which were for his feet alone to travel. If any one in Bestways said beautiful things he surely was the one to do it, so he thought a moment, waved his hand, and smiling sadly murmured: "They come and go — lighter than air, finer than gossamer, ephemeral — butterflies — butterflies of thought, transparent — nebulous — "

"Moonshine!" said Mrs. Sloane, delighted to have found a word. If she had had less than ten thousand a year Watkins would have been very deeply pained. But as she was said to have rather more than that he was amused.

"You may want to sit in the garden — Miss Carston's garden — again some day. Don't let the briars grow over the path, or you may not find it again."

"What does she mean?" thought Mr. Watkins, as he went on his way thinking sadly of Diana, who alone in Bestways had had the power to inspire him.

A little further on Mrs. Sloane met the curate. "Going to Miss Carston's garden?" she asked.

"No, I was n't." He stopped. "Do you think I ought? Would it be politic?" he asked.

And Mrs. Sloane told him he would be a bishop one day.

"That's what you meant?" he asked.

"You are brighter than Mr. Watkins."

"I might be that without setting the Thames on fire, might n't I?"

Mrs. Sloane went on her way, and Mr. Pease on his, both thinking of Diana. What a ripping old lady Mrs. Sloane was! Of course, if he did n't go and sit in Miss Carston's garden when Miss Diana was away — it would look as if he only went there to see Miss Diana! — and he felt the ghost-like grip of gaiters on his legs.

VII

Where trespassers are not prosecuted they must pray to be forgiven; or else change their ways.

OF course Sibyl's friends were surprised that she should have left her children, and of course they said so; what are friends for if they do not say what they think?

Said one: "I should be afraid to love a man so much; he might die." Said another: "Is that reason enough for not loving a man?" Another, a great friend, found it an extraordinary thing leaving her girl, just out.

"You know what the girl says of her mother?" asked another. "She says she is *grande amoureuse!*"

"Most extraordinary leaving her," said yet another, having nothing more original to say.

It was passed along the dado of dowagers at a ball and most of them agreed. Only one said a husband came first, but she was a moderately young dowager with a tilted tiara and memories in her eyes.

"When he's young," suggested another.

"Yes, but Eustace is old enough to look after himself," several agreed.

Meanwhile Marcus looked after Diana. She

found him curiously and delightfully old-fashioned — much more so than Aunt Elsie.

She loved to tease him about his collections. "That darling little Ming thing," she said, with her head on one side, an invitation to correction.

He wished she would speak more reverently of the Chinese — "The Ming thing, as you call it — "

"*Darling* Ming thing," interposed Diana, with her head on the other side.

" — As you call it," went on Marcus, disapproving her attitude of irreverence, "is a thing before which experts bow."

"Worshipping it as its maker worshipped his ancestors."

"I wish I could educate you, Diana, to speak wisely, at all events."

"Is 'darling little Ming thing' not wise?" she asked. "Well, now, — let us consider it. If it's not darling, what is it? You won't let me call it dear, and it 's not impatient — obstructive — indifferent — argumentative — callous — but it is darling, just darling. Soft to the touch — pleasing to the eye — a very ready-money way of spending. Do you know what you could do with what you paid for that darling little Ming thing?"

Marcus shook his head.

"You could take a baby from its earliest days,

from its cradle — you could feed it, clothe it. You could teach it to write, to talk (when spoken to), to spell — talk wisely, write wisely, and spell correctly. You could send it to school — privately, publicly. You could college it — if it scholarshipped itself. You could train it in the business way it should go. It might become a politician, a financier, a collector of Chinese porcelain — or a useful member of society and a good citizen; and for all that there stands the darling little Ming thing in a cabinet — untouched by housemaids."

"You ridiculous child," said Marcus, and his thoughts flew to that girl who had taken in her dogskin-gloved hands a vase less beautiful, infinitely less valuable, than any in his collection, yet most desirable.

"Aunt Elsie 's got a delicious powder-blue vase," said Diana.

"Has she?" said Marcus, knowing the kind of blue china women with country cottages invest in.

Marcus was not so wise as he thought. Diana discovered that before she had been in his house a week. While she was discovering him not so very wise, he was finding her delightfully sympathetic. Discounting her understanding — certain of her sympathy — he unburdened his soul to her because, he said, she must have suffered just as he had. Her mother's absorption in her father must

have grieved her: she must have felt out of it: she and Dick too —

"You think that? How strange!" said Diana, her chin in her hands, her eyes looking at him with their habitual expression of understanding. "Why, Dick and I have often discussed it and we think quite differently. We are so glad she should have that tremendous happiness. We love to see her. An ordinary humdrum affection would never have satisfied her. I believe their love for each other is the kind of which you read in history — more particularly in French memoirs — it's almost terrifying. She's his inspiration and without her he is n't himself. The sympathy between them is amazing. Once when I was ill — he was away — she tried to keep it from him; she said nothing in her letters and he telegraphed: 'What is it? Tell me.' It's no use standing against that, my Uncle Marcus, and we don't want to. No one could be more to me than Mummy is, but Dick and I are very near to one another, — nearer than most brothers and sisters, — and somehow or other we feel as if we ought to be more understanding than most children whose parents don't understand each other at all — See?"

"Yes — and if you marry — as your mother married?" said Marcus, still seeking an excuse for the hurt that was within him — even now.

Diana said: "If I did, Dick would be very pleased. Love can't be selfish and live — even Shan't says, 'Love can't be shelfish,' and it can't."

"Then I don't love," said Marcus ruefully.

"Yes, my uncle, you do."

"It's a devilish selfish kind of love, then."

"It is that," agreed Diana softly.

"I can't," confessed Marcus, "bear to think of your aunt waiting to snatch you from me. She's so violent."

Diana laughed. "What a delightful description of Aunt Elsie!"

"Tell me — what is she like?"

"She 's devilish unselfish — very charming — and she wears an elastic to keep her hat on — "

"Don't!" said Marcus; he had had enough.

There entered into Marcus's soul a great peace (when he could forget the aunt); into his house floods of sunshine. The blinds were pulled up, right up to the top, let go with a bang. The things in his house that he had accounted beautiful must now court comparison with a slip of a girl, who to her uncle's mind was the very first expression of beauty. Imagine, then, his chagrin when, one night at a ball, a friend of his, who had bought for him many of his treasures, who was known to be a judge of beauty, pronounced Diana attractive and fascinating without being strictly beautiful. If a con-

noisseur had found his Charles II chalice a copy he could not have felt more keenly the affront. If he had been a child he would have said, "Shan't play any more," so deeply was he hurt. Seeing a nice-looking, pretty woman sitting by herself, with an expression on her face as though she were singing hymns to her babies in bed, he went up and spoke to her. He knew her, of course, but did not always find time to speak to her, for she never gathered a crowd and he hated to be conspicuous — unless at the same time distinguished.

"I am with my niece," he said, sitting down.

"And which is your niece?" she asked, turning her kind eyes towards him. She seemed to hold up her tiara by the force of uplifted eyebrows. Marcus showed her.

"That lovely thing!" she exclaimed with a generous enthusiasm, and Marcus felt a tingle all down his spine and an inclination to cry. How could any man with a pretension to taste have pronounced her fascinating without being strictly beautiful?

"Yes," he said; "you admire her?"

"Admire her! Could I do anything else?"

"If you were less beautiful yourself — yes!" said Marcus, with a rush of gratitude.

To say the little woman was astonished does not express in the least what she felt, but she was as

shaken as was Marcus by the hysterical outburst. He felt he could never trust himself again.

He had told quite the wrong kind of woman she was beautiful.

He was n't happy again until he had drawn Diana's attention to the little woman and asked her what she thought of her.

"That dear little Madonna? Why, she's exactly what Aunt Elsie goes second-class to Italy to gaze upon — the type exactly. Do go and tell her she's beautiful. It's all she needs."

"I have," said Marcus.

"Stout heart!" said Diana, patting his arm.

Marcus found it necessary and expedient to pass the little woman again to see if she had recovered, and he found her asleep under her tiara. He would have passed on, but she awoke. "It's so late, is n't it? But they must enjoy themselves, must n't they?"

Marcus said it seemed imperative nowadays.

"You are a very lucky uncle," said the little woman.

Again that curious feeling in the spine, like the running down of cold water, assailed Marcus. "I am," he agreed.

"He's so perfectly charming and delightful — "

"Who?" The feeling of flappiness changed to one of apprehension.

The little woman looked: Marcus's eyes followed

hers, and saw standing in the doorway a tall man, on whose arm rested the hand of a great personage. Up the stairs which were straight opposite the doorway came a figure in white — the radiant figure of a niece. In her face he thought was all the joy in the world, concentrated into one look. That look, he feared, was captured and kept by the younger of the two men. The elder man, with an amused gesture and a look of kind understanding, walked away.

"Her mother, all over again," groaned Marcus.

As they drove home together — radiant niece, discomfited uncle — he said nothing, and she said: "You funny old thing." Then there was a pause. She put out one slim foot (she had kicked off her satin shoe) and rested it on the seat opposite.

"You would n't do that, Diana, if you were driving with a strange man — would you?" he asked anxiously, handing her the shoe.

"I might — but of course I should have to marry him — according to your creed. The world of your making, Marcus, must be a very dangerous place to live in. It must be difficult in your world to avoid pitfalls. The sins are many. In a world of my making there would be sins, of course, — lying and cheating, meanness, — they should be great sins. Greater sins should be jealousy — unkindness to children — and that's all for to-day, thank you."

"My dear Diana, there is a very big sin about which you probably know nothing and it has its beginnings in what you call — "

Diana laid her hand on his. "Marcus," she said, "think, would n't the sin of which you are thinking come under the head possibly of unkindness to children — ?"

"My dear child, your ideas are very curious."

"Do you think so?"

"Tell me what you think about things. I know so little of young people."

"What can I tell? My religion? I am a broad-minded Christian."

"Yes, yes, I know. Of course, I know that, dear child."

"Which?"

"Which what?"

"That I am broad-minded or that I am a Christian?"

"A Christian, and it's as well to be broad-minded, without being too broad-minded."

"There are many ways to Heaven; I must choose one. Is that it?"

"Perhaps. I don't see what you want with new religions."

"You think the well-worn narrow path the better way — the path down which two can't go abreast."

"I did n't mean religion exactly; that goes without saying."

"Does it? Yes, I think you are right. One can't say much about what one most feels, can one?"

"Your ideas about life generally is more what I mean."

"Life? What life? Which life? This everyday dancing life — or the life that comes later?"

"The life that comes later — your life. What life do you look forward to?" If Marcus imagined Diana looked forward to a life wherein visits to Uncle Marcus on Sundays were things of delirious delight, he was likely to be disappointed.

"Oh, I see — well, I suppose when I have danced a great deal and frivolled a great deal — and cried a great deal — and laughed a great deal — I shall marry."

"Yes, that's what I mean, I suppose." The Sunday visits after all were not so improbable. He would have every conceivable clockwork toy in the cupboard. "Now what are your ideas of marriage — just having a good time?"

"Partly; of course, I should like a pearl necklace — or a rope, perhaps — and three babies."

"And what sort of a mother would you be?"

"A good, hard-working, honest mother, of course — "

"Hard-working?"

"I should work hard to make them good babies."

"And their father? What sort of a man should he be?"

"Like my father, if another exists."

The vision of visits on Sundays faded away, the clockwork toys were put back in the cupboard, they would n't go — not one of them.

"Your father? Is he your ideal?"

"Of course — there is no one like him."

"And for this man who is to be so good, you will keep yourself — good?"

"What do you mean?" asked Diana passionately, her eyes shining, her cheeks aflame.

In a moment Marcus was humble, explaining eagerly that he was only trying to find out — if these friendships between boys and girls were good things — and wise? He had been frightened —

"By dowagers," said Diana; "why do you go and sit among them and gossip? Why don't you say straight out, 'Diana, would you let a man kiss you?' Say it — be quick — or I shall go."

She held the speaking-tube to her lips, threatening; Marcus was dumb.

"Stop!" she commanded, and Tooke, the chauffeur, obeyed.

She opened the door of the car and stepped out — into the street. It all happened in a second before Marcus realized what she was going to do. He

followed her as quickly as he could, but she was too quick for him. What a sight for London — he thought — at four o'clock on a summer's morning: the day dawning — or dawned — and into the arms of the rising sun, like a leaf blown by the wind, hardly seeming to touch the ground, flew Diana — to Marcus's astonished vision a whirl of white tulle and long legs; and after her ran he — Marcus Maitland, uncle, bachelor, taxpayer, and citizen. Behind him he heard the hoot of a horn and the car stopped. "Better get in, sir; you can't go the pace and Miss Diana will tire. Very good, sir — " This at an impatient gesture from Mr. Maitland, and Marcus went on, Tooke not driving fast enough to catch the niece fleeing, or slow enough to witness the discomfiture of the uncle pursuing. When Marcus arrived at his door he presumed he would find a beaten and humbled niece, unable to get in: but he found the door wide open, a detestable habit of hers: she must have had her key. He went into the hall — listened. Not a sound; he stole upstairs and listened. He heard a sound of running water — it was Diana's bath filling. He was very, very angry with her. She was like her aunt — exactly like; he had known that aunt was a violent woman.

He went to bed and he slept badly. A few hours later, with his morning tea Pillar brought him a note. He opened it and read:

You have trespassed where an uncle may not go — there are places in our hearts that are barred, even to mothers, and mothers know it and understand. I know, dear old thing, you don't realize how big your feet are or how heavily you tread. You have squashed all sorts of little plants that were beginning to grow in my heart — that's a pity, you know! Aunt Elsie never trespasses, for all her violence. You have lived too long in your narrow world, dear old Marcus. A world in which no man can be trusted at all and women only a little. I have become more distrustful of men since I lived with you than I ever was before. You will say that is what you wish. But it is not what I wish. Why are you and Aunt Elsie both afraid of the opposite sex? Aunt Elsie is frightened if she meets a drunken bricklayer in a lane after sundown. Why? You are just as afraid of a woman. Why? I would rather go round the world alone with a man than with a woman. I shan't do it because it's not done — as they say. But Dick says there should be no possible harm in it.

When Marcus came down to breakfast he was as silent, as quiet, as a heron fishing on the shore of a Highland loch — and as shy. He was sure Diana would put her arms round his neck and forgive him — and ask his forgiveness. (He was an

old-fashioned uncle.) But no Diana came. When he told Pillar to send up word that — Pillar said Miss Diana had been called very early — in fact had not been to bed, he believed — and had gone —

"Where?"

"To Miss Carston, sir."

"How did she go?"

"The car, sir; it happened — Tooke chanced to be about; after all, it's the best way of going, sir, is n't it?"

"When Tooke returns I want to see him."

The joys of living alone were once more Marcus's. What were they? There was no one to seize the coffee-pot when he wanted it; to ask him whom his letters were from; to read him bits out of the paper: bits he did n't want to hear; bits he had read the evening before. There was no one to discuss plans that could never come off. There were no engagements read out to him, between people he had never heard of — at all events, by the names of Toddy and Doddy and Buffy and Bunny.

On the other hand, there were things he missed. She had amused him. Her girl friends had seemed to him amazing people: her boy friends not less amazing. Their spirits were wonderful, their ways past finding out, their ingenuity remarkable, their patronage almost tender in its pity. Diana and her friends were no more. Pillar remained. And in the

country lived Miss Carston and to her Diana had gone — in HIS car!

That evening entered Pillar. "Tooke is here, sir."

"Send him in," said Marcus, glad that his anger had in no way grown less during the day.

Entered Tooke, cap in hand. A chauffeur unarmed: he said nothing, of course. But there was a look in his eyes that said as clearly as though he had spoken it — as man to man: "What would you have done in my place? What would you have done if she had arst you?"

A capless, unarmed chauffeur, yet armed to the eyes — invulnerable was Tooke.

"Tooke?"

"Sir?"

"Car run well?"

"Fine, sir."

"I was thinking, Tooke, that we ought to have a lining made if Miss Diana is going much into the country — what is the stuff? You know — kind of drill, is n't it? It would save the lining; see to it, will you?"

"Very good, sir. A detachable lining, I take it you mean, sir?"

"Yes."

VIII

A thought may be a link; it may also be a barrier.

ELSIE CARSTON grew restless. It was all very well that Diana should go to London to have a good time, but the season in London was over. There was nothing left for Diana to do but find the streets hot and the parks empty. To be with Mr. Maitland could not in any way be called a pleasure. Diana was wonderfully loyal to her uncle. Elsie was glad of that. She would n't have had the child otherwise, but that it was loyalty that prevented her really saying what she thought of him, she knew. It could be nothing else. She was glad she had said to Diana when she had left for London: "Now, Diana, remember, whatever you think of your uncle, you must n't say it — even to me. He means to be very kind."

Diana had implicitly obeyed her aunt. Loyally she had persisted that he was a dear. Elsie, of course, knew he could not be that, but she knew that uncles with money are people to propitiate — one cannot afford to treat them as they should be treated.

"When 's Diana comin'?" asked Shan't, at breakfast, over the edge of her porridge-bowl.

"That was just what I was wondering, Shan't."

"Why do you wonder?"

"Yes, exactly; why, my child?"

"Why?"

"Why?"

"You've said that before."

"And I shall probably say it again."

Poor Aunt Elsie, thought Shan't, she was feeling the heat — that is what makes people cross.

"Why?" she repeated — in order to find out if Aunt Elsie was really cross or only just pretending.

"Because I want to."

"Suppose we went on saying 'Why?' forever — what d' you suppose would happen?"

Aunt Elsie did n't answer, so Shan't knew she was really cross. "I want Diana," she said plaintively.

"We all want Diana," answered Aunt Elsie snappily.

"Won't she ever come?"

"Of course."

"She has n't gone to Heaven, then — or anything awful like that?" suggested Shan't cheerfully.

"My dear Shan't, what an awful idea! — I mean — it is n't really an awful idea — I did n't mean that — "

"Goin' to Heaven is ge'rally called, 'Oh, that will be joyful,' is n't it?"

"Yes, dear — shall I write and ask Diana if she is coming?"

Shan't nodded; then she jumped up and down in her chair and did dangerous things with her spoon, and the porridge within the spoon, and the only-aunt-in-the-world had to tell her to sit still and to put her spoon down or to finish her porridge. It is extraordinary the dulness of the alternatives grown-ups offer children, always ending up with "or else."

"Or else what?" ask the children, always hoping, perhaps, that the grown-ups will think of something new — going to bed early, no jam for tea, are ridden to death. There is no child that does n't despair at the lack of enterprise shown by grown-ups in the inventing of punishments for crimes which are not strictly punishable. Why should n't Shan't, if she chose, wave her spoon in the air at the thought of Diana's return? She did n't make the porridge: it was n't her fault it was made wet and squashy — and splashable about.

"I will ask her," said Aunt Elsie; and she meant it, too, and if she just mentioned the prospect of a dance — was it not perfectly justifiable? She had not suggested it. If Mrs. Sloane chose — to be so kind —

Aunt Elsie went to her writing-table and she wrote until she found Shan't biting the edge of the

table. Then she left off writing to show Shan't the teeth-marks she had made. Shan't was intensely interested, but not in the least surprised. Why, she was making them on purpose all the time! Did n't Aunt Elsie think she was? It was then Aunt Elsie determined that Uncle Marcus should have his furniture bitten. It would do him all the good in the world. To her letter she added a post-script — "Tell Mr. Maitland he can have Shan't for a few days if he likes. This is, I believe, the arrangement we made. She can then return a few days before you come back — " And Elsie folded the letter, feeling she was doing the right and honourable thing — while Shan't, with her chin resting on the edge of the table, made tiger faces at her. Aunt Elsie knew Mr. Maitland gave large sums for furniture and that his furniture consisted of "pieces." Shan't should set her mark upon them.

At that moment the door opened and in walked Diana.

"Darlings!" she cried, snatching up Shan't and putting her on Aunt Elsie's lap so that she might hug them both together and so make up for lost time.

"Why did you come?" asked Aunt Elsie; "not that; but how did you get away?"

"Quite easily."

"You have n't —?"

"Of course not: he 's a dear, but London is hot — and Shan't is a darling and the only-aunt-in-the-world — is — "

"I am just offering him Shan't," said Aunt Elsie.

"Writing to him?"

"No, I was writing to you — "

"Well, write to him; say I have arrived. Say I look so well — "

"You do, darling — you do!"

"Yes — and add that you can't take Shan't to the seaside this year."

"Oh, do — take me to the seaside," moaned Shan't.

"You tell Uncle Marcus that Aunt Elsie won't take you to the seaside, Shan't, poor little thing!"

"Don't say *won't*," said Aunt Elsie.

"What shall I say, then?" asked Shan't.

"Say *won't*," said Diana.

"She won't — she won't — she wo-n't," murmured Shan't.

"It is delightful to have you back," said Aunt Elsie, as arm in arm she and Diana went round the garden, leaving Shan't to write to Uncle Marcus — a rash thing to do — "with re-al ink," sighed Shan't.

It was rather curious, but that very morning Mr. Pease, remembering what Mrs. Sloane had

said, determined to go and sit in Miss Carston's garden. He quite saw it was the politic thing to do. Then Miss Carston could n't think what she would be almost bound to think —

Mr. Watkins had thought over that brambly, overgrown path to which Mrs. Sloane had referred. At last he remembered the source from which the idea had flowed. It was from a Persian poem. Any idea Mr. Watkins must always run to ground. If any new idea were to burst upon Bestways it must come from him. He could bear a woman to be anything rather than original. He would have talked more if he could have afforded to. But his thoughts were to him as valuable as jewels, he must keep them until he could be paid for them. He could n't afford to be amusing like ordinary people. But still the thought that had inspired Mrs. Sloane had been a wise one — Of course, if he only went to Miss Carston's garden when Miss Diana was there, Miss Carston would think — that he only went — what would she think? He would therefore go at once. So by three o'clock on the day Diana came home two men had passed through the garden gate, and the first person they each came upon, of course, was Diana.

Mr. Pease was the first to find her. "You here!" he exclaimed. "Well — I am — surprised — I mean I really am — do you know why I came to-day?"

Diana had no idea.

"Because I thought you were n't here."

There was a pause. "Why are you laughing, Miss Diana? I mean I came because you were n't here, so that I might come when you were."

"I see!"

"Do you, really?"

And Mr. Pease hastened to say that if he only came when she was there it would look as if —

"You came to see me?"

Mr. Pease said he felt he had somehow or other not said quite what he meant to say.

Diana quickly assured him she knew exactly what he had meant to say — that he really came to see Aunt Elsie, but that if he waited till Aunt Elsie had her niece back, then it would look as if it was the niece he had wanted to see. It was very clever of him — and Aunt Elsie would never suspect.

"That is n't in the least what I meant; it was rather the other way round."

"And Mr. Watkins, why does he come to sit in Aunt Elsie's garden?"

Across the lawn, towards the fount of his inspiration, knowing not she was there, came Mr. Watkins, murmuring as he walked: smiling as apt phrases broke from his lips — "rippling rhythmetic

phrases," he would have called them. He spoke to his sisters, the bees; sang to his brothers, the birds; conscious all the while of the suitability of his garb and the length of his hair. If Diana were but there to see! Diana was there and she saw, and she looked at Mr. Pease. Mr. Pease looked away. He carried Christianity to the length of never making fun of another less well placed than himself, and well placed he now was; next to Diana. And Diana, as she sat, had no other side. A matter for congratulation to any man, or child, who loves. To halve sides may mean an acute mental agony. On Diana's other side rose a pillar of rambling roses, of which no man could be jealous. Mr. Pease had not got so far as to be jealous of the breezes that played in his lady's hair, or of the roses that fluttered their petals over her. He left such things to Watkins.

"Well, Watkins?" he said.

"Is it *well?*" questioned Watkins, from despondent habit; then he caught sight of Diana. The spring went from his walk, the lilt from his voice. She had come back and Pease had known she was coming. Pease without a sense of honour was no longer his friend — the past must be as though it had never been. Never again would he confide in Pease: never again read him his poems: share his Sunday sausages.

"This is delightful!" he said, looking first at Pease, then at the pillar of roses that stood as it were on Diana's left hand; finally he sank down at Diana's feet. "Now tell me — everything," he said; "what saw you in London?"

"Men and things — things and men," said Diana.

"Just men?"

"Yes, just men, and unjust — poets and policemen."

"Bad poets?"

"Bad poets."

"And what did the poets do?"

"One sold bootlaces for a living."

"And does he yet live?"

"No, he died."

"Who got the bootlaces?"

"The policeman got the bootlaces."

"Who gave him — a button-hook?" asked Shan't, remembering that Uncle Marcus could not lace or unlace his boots without one.

"What a strange thing," said Mr. Watkins. "Out of the mouth of babes and — and yet — why strange? Strange that it should be true that out of the — "

"Are n't we getting in a bit deep?" asked Mr. Pease, who felt that the poet was trespassing on his ground. Poets in general he handed over to

Watkins to play with as he liked, but the Bible — and as a future bishop — button-hooks — well, after all, they were his province.

"What nonsense we talk!" said Diana; "I propose we go in to tea."

"*You* ought to propose," said Shan't to Mr. Pease; "you could if you liked — and *you*," she said, nodding at Mr. Watkins; "could n't they, Diana?"

"They might."

"Will you?" Shan't said, turning to Mr. Pease; "do let him, Diana."

Diana thought it better not. It was too hot — too delicious a day altogether to spoil.

Shan't was very disappointed. She slipped her hand into that of the curate. "*You* do — " she whispered, — "it would be such fun. Then you could be married — would n't you like it?"

Mr. Pease said he would like it very much — only people never did propose on Wednesdays.

"On what days, then?"

"Only on Saturday afternoons — at half-past three — on half-holidays — "

"Truthfully?"

"More or less — "

"I am going to the seaside," said Shan't, "with my darling uncle" — this unctuously.

"Are you? That will be delightful."

"I thought you were goin' to say, 'Oh, that will be joyful,' but that's about dying, is n't it?"

Mr. Pease thought it was.

"Do you think it's such a very joyful thing to die?"

Mr. Pease hesitated. He had no wish to die. He raised his eyes to the heavens above him: they looked their best, he was sure, from where he stood: his eyes to the waving tree-tops; they had not whispered half the secrets they had to tell him. He looked at the daisy-sown lawn; at Diana who walked a few paces in front of him; at Shan't who walked beside him. He did n't want to die; he wanted desperately to live. To live till that day when he should be asked to pay the bill for some blue stuff such as Shan't's frock was made of. Blue stuff like that must be fairly cheap. It was not much to aspire to — the blue cottony stuff, he meant! His grasp tightened on the hand of Shan't.

"You do squeeze hard," she said — "it makes my hand so hot, like when you hold daisies, you know."

"I was afraid I might lose you," he explained, releasing her hand.

"I would n't run away, it would be rude — would n't it? Only if I go to the sea — that won't be so very rude — " Then she added: "I did n't

want to leave go — not specially." She slipped her hand in his.

"That would be different," said Mr. Pease, referring to the visit to the seaside.

"Why would it be?"

"Because — the sea is always different from anything else in the world. There will be deep, deep golden sands at the sea — there are none here — and there will be crabs and starfish — and babies of all sizes — and shapes — round and square — think of that!"

"Squ-are?" queried Shan't; "I don't think they could be that."

"I think so."

"I don't think their mothers would let them."

"Perhaps you're right."

"Gardens are square in London — are n't they?"

Mr. Pease said, of course they were. Perhaps he was thinking of square gardens.

"What else will there be at the sea?"

"There will be coast-guardsmen."

"What are they like?"

"They are great big men — and they have beards — and they look through telescopes — and they never tell you what they see."

"Not if you asked them very nicely, would n't they?"

"No, not even then."

"P'r'aps they don't see anything."

"I believe you have lighted on a great truth."

"What's that?"

"What's what?"

"What you said."

"I don't know."

"Why don't you?"

"I don't know."

"Let's play something else. You be funny — or something — or shall we *just* have tea?"

Mr. Pease thought, just have tea. It was so much easier than being funny.

Meanwhile Mr. Watkins thought he had proposed to Diana and was in an agony of mind not knowing whether she knew it or not. If she did not know it, he thought he would leave things alone. But if she knew he had proposed, he would be equally willing to let things stand. Glad to let them! But he had been rushed, as it were, into a declaration. The perfidy of Pease had upset him; the prettiness of Diana had distracted him. And yet he had always vowed that nothing should ever induce him to marry a pretty woman. True beauty must be strange: must not be admired of the people — or understood by the crowd. He would rather be one of those who admired "the other sister far more." It showed discrimination: argued a critical faculty. Diana was too obviously pretty. He did n't

suppose any one had ever argued the point. Therefore she did not come up to what he had set as his standard. But still, if he had proposed — he was quite glad — quite. It was possible he had been so subtle, disguised his meaning so cleverly that Diana had not seen whither he was drifting. Mr. Watkins decided to go by the size of the tea she was able to eat.

Diana was able to eat quite a good tea. The colour in her cheeks neither deepened nor paled, and she forgot whether Mr. Watkins liked sugar or not in his tea. So he decided he had carried subtlety too far. Or perhaps it had served him well. He would be better able to judge of that later on. To-morrow morning! After proposing he had always heard it was the next morning that tells.

Night had come. Shan't had been asleep for hours. Diana was asleep. Only Aunt Elsie was awake — and she asked of herself this question — "Is she in love and has she told *him?*"

. . . . . .

He, alone in London, asked of himself the same question: "Is she in love — and has she told *her?*" If he had known that Aunt Elsie lay awake, as he lay awake, wondering, he would have been happier.

In a Government House far, far away, two people asked of each other the same question. The red

carpet was rolled up, the band had gone to bed, the tiara was taken off, and the A.D.C.'s were no longer "studies in scarlet and gold," but were presumably asleep, dreaming of trout streams and England; and Sibyl and her husband sat together — Sibyl with her hair in two long plaits looking absurdly like Diana. Her husband loved her like that. It amused him to see how young she looked. And the dinner? How had it gone off? They did not talk of dinners. They sat for some time saying nothing. The air was heavy with the scent of flowers, a breeze blew through the open windows. "What is Diana doing?" asked Sibyl. "No, don't bother about the difference in time. Supposing it is *there* what it is *here* — what is she doing?"

Her father hoped she was in bed.

Diana in bed! Countless memories there — delicious memories. Memories that brought tears to the mother's eyes — and because of the tears in her eyes, to the father's eyes too.

"And — Dick?"

Again they were both silent. They were never so silent as when they talked of their children — there was so much to say.

"And Shan't?"

There was another silence; then Sibyl said: "I wonder if she is in love?"

"I suppose it's possible at her age."

"She's nineteen."

"That does n't seem possible."

"I sometimes hope she will marry — "

"He 's not good enough."

"You don't know who I was going to say?"

"It makes no difference," said Diana's father.

And one of the aides-de-camp asked of himself the same question. "Is she in love?" and he was properly and horribly and happily miserable.

Before he got into bed he took from his despatch-case a photograph (he had stolen it, by the way) and put it on the table beside his bed. "Good-night, you darling," he whispered; "you'll wait till you've seen me, won't you? I mean — you'll give me a chance before you fall in love?" And he fell asleep, thinking, and he slept, dreaming, of Diana. And Diana hardly knew of his existence — never dreamed that the prayers of an A.D.C. committed her every night to God's safe keeping, until he should be able to keep guard over her himself.

Her mother had mentioned once or twice that Captain Hastings was fond of weeding.

Captain Hastings would not have slept so well as he did had he known that was all Lady Carston had said about him. He hated weeding — except as a means to an end. What had she done, he

would have asked, with all the beautiful things he had said about love and marriage and life in general, and His Excellency in particular, if she had not sent them on to her whose photograph had inspired them?

IX

A man may build his house on what he wills,
A child with sand her painted bucket fills.

DIANA wrote to her uncle and said poor Shan't wanted to go to the seaside, but Aunt Elsie could not manage to take her there. Poor little Shan't! She did so love the sea, and her legs were so pale!

"Selfish woman," said Marcus; "why could n't she make an effort?" To some children the seaside was an absolute necessity. If she would n't he would, and he wrote and said so.

From then onwards, until the day came on which he took Shan't to the seaside, he lay awake at night pondering on many things — buttons and strings — hooks and eyes — strings and buttons — hooks and strings — buttons and eyes — and he wondered if there were any place at which an uncle — anxious to learn — could be instructed in the dressing and undressing of a small niece on the sands — under the shadow of an upturned boat — on the beach of a favourite watering-place? Would it be possible to go to a watering-place that was not a favourite? Then as he fell asleep there rose before his closing eyes the vision of a house

on wheels — cream to palish pink in colour — which boasted of two side windows and dropped steps from its front door. He had seen such buildings years ago — bathing-machines! And in a bathing-machine the uncle found shelter. They are safer, and wiser and better things, than aunts. Where Aunt Elsie might have helped him, the bathing-machine got him out of a difficulty, and protected him.

Marcus Maitland had forgotten what the seaside was like. It compared in no way with the shores of a sea loch in Scotland — where the peace and beauty are indescribable; where he had many a time watched the swift sweep of the gulls on the wing — the diving of terns. He had seen seals swimming about — wise old men of the sea. He had heard, up on the hill, the croak of the raven; had seen the shadow on the hillside of an eagle's wings: and there were no babies. An uncle could sit at peace: with no violent aunt in the background. But a favourite watering-place! It was hotter than he had remembered it — more glaring: the people on the beach were less attractive: the babies less pink and less plentiful than the advertisements had promised. Not less plentiful in a way, but they did not stretch right across the beach away to the horizon, hand in hand, nor did they smile at him an invitation to arise and bathe.

They squatted in groups about the sand, making castle puddings. Nurses knelt beside them. Nannies, with rugs and bags and baskets, and bottles — and mackintoshes even, and umbrellas, on hot days; and large quantities of white needle-work — garments for the children. It distressed Marcus to think that all this time there was nothing being made for Shan't. All along the beach, so far as he could see, nurses sewed. Her wardrobe would get terribly out of date. But she did n't seem to mind; she was very happy. The tucking-in of petticoats had been less difficult than Marcus had imagined: in fact he began to wonder if these things came naturally to men, as they were supposed to come to women. Perhaps in all men there lay dormant the paternal instinct. Certainly, whether the instinct were there or not, he took to this sort of thing amazingly naturally. That he looked the part he never thought. He knew himself to be an uncle, so never thought of himself as anything else.

A mother and daughter began to take notice of Shan't. One morning they smiled at her and Shan't smiled back, all over her small person. There was no exclusiveness about this, the younger of his nieces. Diana did at times put her small head up in the air and walk as though the whole world belonged to her — but Shan't — never! She belonged to the whole world — quite another thing. The

next morning the mother smiled again and the daughter dropped her book. Whereas Shan't would promptly have buried it in the sand, Marcus felt bound to pick it up and restore it to its glowing owner. He was thanked by the young woman with a warmth that surprised him. Her voice throbbed with thankfulness, so much so that he wished he had looked at the title of the book. Was the tribute to the author?

The following morning Marcus would have chosen another place in the sun, but Shan't liked her old haunts — there was a darlin' crab — she had promised it to come back — faithfully. Uncle Marcus sought to assure her that where a crab was one day, it was not bound to be the next. The sea took it out — right out!

"Right out — right out," said Shan't, and she looked so like crying over the departure of the crab seawards that he made for the spot where it had been, and, of course (so hard on uncles this sort of thing!) there was a crab, "in the very same place" — so Shan't said — "and," she added, "it was a darlin' and it looked so pleased to see me — it smiled!"

This kind of thing, too, it was that distressed Marcus. Ought he, as uncle, to tell her that crabs did not smile, or should he leave it alone. "It 's a darlin'," she repeated. She stood looking at him

in grave displeasure — looked at him under her eyelashes. He had lied. The sea had not taken her darlin' crab away. She knew it had n't. The sea had been falsely accused. Shan't was ever on the side of the injured. The mother and daughter came along and found Marcus standing thus being judged of Shan't, and this time they both smiled.

"What a darling!" said the younger of the two women, and Shan't turned and frowned at her. "Are n't you?" asked the girl.

"No," said Shan't.

"What's your name?"

"Shan't-if-I-don't-want-to."

"Oh, don't, please, if you don't want to."

"It's that," said Shan't.

"What?"

"Shan't-if-I-don't — want — to."

"I don't want you to," said the girl with infinite patience — maternal patience, if Marcus could but have appreciated it. The mother looked to see if it were lost upon the man — and saw it was lost. Therefore she sat down beside Marcus, and Shan't and the girl — friends by this time — were told to run and play.

The mother opened her sunshade and turned a deeply sympathetic face towards a very miserable and bewildered Marcus. This was n't the kind of woman with whom he was at ease. She made him

shy, which was a thing he was not accustomed to be. He made other people shy as a rule.

"She's a dear little child," said the unwelcome woman.

"She is," said Marcus. "Do you mind if I smoke?" He had found smoking as efficacious against some kinds of women as it is said to be against some kinds of insects — what kinds has not as yet been specified.

"I love it — my daughter is so fond of it." Seeing Marcus's look of indifference, perhaps of repugnance — she could not tell which — she added for safety, "The smell of it."

"Umph," said Marcus.

"How old is she?"

"Your daughter?" asked Marcus.

And the mother laughed. "How amusing you are! And yet you don't feel it, do you? you don't look it."

"Umph!"

"My daughter and I said how sad you looked — your whole life, we could see, is centred in that child."

"Not entirely," said Marcus, thinking of his collections.

"No? But still for a man alone it is a great responsibility."

"I've got some one with me, thank you, to help — a housemaid, her father's a coast-guardsman."

"Of course, yes."

"It's the buttons and things, on the beach."

"Of course, yes. Is she like her mother?"

"Like her mother? Yes, I suppose she is — wider between the eyes, perhaps — a little."

"Ah, the tragedies of life!" A pause, then she added: "Was she taken early?"

"Who?"

"Her mother — that sacred name."

"Her mother is abroad."

"Oh, really, I see, of course. We never thought of that. A man alone with a child always suggests — "

"What?" He was really interested. How he appeared to others was a subject that always held him.

"A widower — bereavement."

"Oh, no, I'm not a widower, far from it — "

The mother found the sun too hot, she must go; she rose, called to her daughter, and they went on, little knowing that, although they had not found a widower, they had found a bachelor, which is in some ways a far better thing —

"Nice lady," said Shan't decisively, pouring sand from her spade on to Marcus's shoes.

"What did she talk about?" he asked.

"Cwabs."

"What did she say about crabs?"

"She said — there was one called Penepoly — I think it was — and she was very nice indeed — and she's dead, so we buried her — and we are n't goin' to be sad about it because it is happier for her, because her — husband is dead too — and there are n't any children — at least not many — There was lots more, only I forget — she was very silly, really."

"Am I silly, Shan't?"

"Yes," said Shan't; then seizing him round the neck she ecstatically hugged him.

After Shan't's prayers were said there lay a long evening before Marcus. He made Shan't's going to bed as late as he dared with the housemaid on the watch. It could hardly be made to last over seven o'clock — and then it was over-late, so the housemaid said. Shan't was inclined to lengthen her day by means of inordinate praying. The prayers ran on to an extraordinary length. Uncle Marcus could not know that Aunt Elsie strictly limited the number of people prayed for. When Shan't got down to postmen what posted letters, and cwabs what went to sea — and old gentlemen who had n't got any buns, and old ladies who had n't got any cake — and po-or little children who had n't got any bull's-eyes, Uncle Marcus should have brought her up with a round turn; but he let her wander on till she came to her darlin' Aunt

Elsie, when he said it was time to stop. "One more, please," said Shan't; and she shut her eyes tight and prayed: "Please God, give me a nice donkey ride to-morrow morning at ten o'clock sharp." She waited, then said, "Thank you," bowed, and turning to Marcus said triumphantly: "God says he *will*."

And Marcus gave her the nice donkey ride the next morning at ten o'clock — sharp.

After Shan't was in bed and asleep, Marcus took to walking on the sea-front and there he met again the daughter of the mother. She was certainly an attractive girl — and she said she found him sympathetic and understanding. This was gratifying in the extreme to Marcus — few can withstand so subtle a form of appreciation. He had imagined himself unsympathetic outwardly, difficult to know; but at heart capable of intense feeling. He is not the only man who has thus pictured himself.

Then he took to meeting the girl accidentally by day, surprising her reading, or gazing out to sea, with the book on her lap upside down. Her eyes were wonderfully expressive, full of a sadness she did not feel. This she knew. Marcus did not.

In this manner, seeking to comfort where sorrow was not, but only simple femininity, Marcus lost Shan't. Hurriedly he sought her: up and down the

beach, stooping to inspect closely the faces of bending babies, entirely forgetting, it seemed, the age and size of Shan't. As he rushed along the seafront, he chanced upon an upturned perambulator. It was in the charge of a small girl hardly bigger than Shan't, though possibly much older. She was groping in the gutter, heedless of the baby's perilous position. "'Ave you seen 'is satisfoyer?" asked the small woman-child of Marcus. Marcus righted the perambulator, rearranged the baby in the righted perambulator, and said he had not seen the "satisfoyer." But he searched for it, found it: wiped it, and popped it into the baby's mouth, just as any lamentably ignorant nurse or mother or woman-child might have done. But he knew better: even mere man knows what danger there lies to the future of England in the snare of the "satisfoyer." But Marcus was too busy to think of the future of England and her citizens; he was frightfully busy. He had just time to find the baby's "satisfoyer," and to find the baby the ugliest he had ever seen, and was off on his search for Shan't. What should he say to Sibyl if he should fail to find her? To that detestable aunt? To Diana?

He found Shan't in the process of being converted, and she was enjoying it immensely. Her eyes were cast heavenwards in an abandonment of religious ecstasy: her mouth was rounded to its

widest. She was singing a hymn: sharing a hymn-book with a black man — not even a man black in parts, as is commonly to be met at the seaside, but a real black man.

Marcus watched in despair. For his niece he had ceased to exist — only as part of this world had she known him. She was translated to another: a world where the sands were more golden, the sea more glassy than they could ever be here on earth.

Marcus waited. Waited until Shan't, with a radiant smile, turned to the black man, thanked him, folded her small hands, gloved in white cotton gloves, the fingers of which turned up as only white cotton fingers can, and gave herself up to the sermon.

"Poor devil!" murmured Marcus, perhaps at the thought of Shan't's extreme fairness.

In the middle of the sermon the attention of Shan't slackened: she swallowed: she removed her gaze from the face of the preacher, just to look around, to see, perhaps, if there were any little boys less religious — or as religious — as herself, and her eyes met those of her reproachful uncle. Hers straightway became fixed on that far-away something. Things have — in the history of the world — looked as innocent as she looked: but very few — among them puppies in chicken-yards. She was absorbed in that far-away something —

but what gave her away was the pink flush which stole over her little face, then flooded it. Tears gathered in her eyes. But she still gazed bravely — intently — absorbedly.

Marcus walked round, behind the crowd, stooped down behind her and whispered. She rose, and putting her hand in his walked away with him.

"Did you like it, Shan't?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered. "You see, I had n't got a hymn-book of my own."

"So I supposed," he said stiffly.

"*I* turned over."

"Did you? Did you like the preacher?"

"Yes. He was rather silly, really." Shan't's usual summary, this.

"What did the preacher say?"

Shan't hesitated — what *did* he say? "He said I must love God — and not eat any more apples."

"Oh!" said Marcus, not recognizing in this brief summary the story of the Garden of Eden. He did n't believe "that aunt" would either.

"D' you think you'll go to Heaven?" asked Shan't cheerfully.

Marcus humbly answered that he hoped he might if he were very good.

"What will God call you?"

This Marcus did n't know; could n't say; had never thought.

"'Mis-ter Maitland' — or 'Marcus' — which would you like best?"

Marcus thought — his Christian name was nicest — just as Shan't said it.

"But the butler must say 'Mister Maitland,' must n't he?"

"What butler?"

"God's butler," said Shan't, solemnly, rather overcome at the thought of a personage so grand — so awe-inspiring.

"I don't suppose God has a butler, Shan't."

"Don't you? Who are the Pillars of God's house, then? Nannie reads about them — "

"Oh, I see."

"There m-ust be, must n't there — because of Pillar?"

"Of course there must be."

"Will you give Pillar up to God for his house — if God wanted him? "

"I suppose I should have to."

"I expect he would do things for you — all the same, when you go to Heaven, if God goes away for a few days — and other times too?"

"Who, Pillar?"

"Yes."

"I expect he would."

"He says you can't do without him, so he'd have to."

"Does he say that?" asked Marcus, feeling a glow of absurd thankfulness permeating his being —

Shan't nodded and said fervently that she liked Pillar. Marcus had to assure her that he did, too, and there the matter ended — so far as Shan't was concerned; but not for Marcus. He was n't superstitious, but he wished Shan't had n't broached the subject of giving Pillar up to any one. Existence without Pillar would be an impossibility. That afternoon by letter Marcus raised the wages of Pillar five pounds a year, and after listening to Shan't's prayers asking God to bless Pillar, he wished he had made it ten pounds. It was disturbing. Life generally was disturbing. An elderly woman in a bath-chair saw that it was so, or guessed it rather than saw it. She was an adept at guessing things. She had seen Marcus meet and walk away with the girl with big brown eyes, which held tragedy in their depths. She could see by the cut of Marcus's clothes, by his shoes, all she wanted to know of his circumstances in life. She guessed him to be a bachelor and defenceless, because bored. This was not entirely astuteness on her part; she had heard Shan't call him "Uncle," and it is only a bachelor uncle who would take a small niece away with him, knowing nothing of the dangers of so doing, and the difficulties. No married man would attempt to do what it takes at least

two women to do properly — judging by the babies on the shore and their attendants.

So the next time Marcus passed the elderly woman in her bath-chair, she smiled at him. Not as the other woman had smiled, hoping to attract him, but knowing she would. He was attracted. He liked elderly women as many bachelors do. They find in them a safe outlet.

"Come and talk to me," said this one, and Marcus felt delighted to do so. "What have you done with your little girl?" she asked.

Marcus said he had left her on the sands — with —

"Oh, yes, I know, the nice girl with dark eyes — tragic eyes, tragic eyes set in a calm face. Nature plays curious tricks, does n't she?"

"Yes — I suppose she does. She is my niece."

"The girl with the tragic eyes — that accounts for it, then."

"No — no — the child."

"A delightful child."

That started Marcus — off he went. It was astonishing how much he found to say about Shan't. From her getting up in the morning to her going to bed at night: he told it all — and the woman in the bath-chair listened with gentle amusement. Here was a father utterly wasted. This man should marry: but not the girl with tragic, happy, big

brown eyes. She must n't marry a man who would criticize her and be ashamed of her connections. This man was not a big enough man to marry her. He must marry one of his set; who knew what to say and when to say it, and how to say it: who would have things social at her finger-tips. The woman in the bath-chair liked the girl with brown eyes, but she saw at a glance what background should be hers. She settled her in her home with a devoted husband. They would furnish in suites. The girl would have her embroidered tea-cosy: that was certain and a table centre of Indian embroidery — it might be worked in gold thread: it might be worked in green beetles. She would wear — ? She would dress in the height of the fashion. This was delightful. The elderly woman loved making up stories about people. But it did n't amuse Marcus; he did n't know what she was smiling at.

"What amuses you?" he asked.

"So much — nearly everything! In fact everything except the tragedies of life — and those often might have been avoided if some one had laughed at the right moment."

"The difficulty is to know the right moment," said Marcus. "What amused you?"

She told him: described the home she had chosen for the girl. Marcus said she was very unkind.

Why unkind? she wanted to know. She was praising the girl, if only he could see it. That was why he could never marry a girl like that: he could never see how delightful, how wholesome, how splendid she was.

"If you had a son — would you like him to marry her?"

"No, because my son might, I am afraid, be something like you. Too spoilt to be natural. Both you and he would look for things that are superficial and unnecessary — a certain easy manner — a ready jargon. You are perfectly right to look for it, for you have come to expect it. As I say, you would criticize this girl — and criticism would stunt her growth. She would be unnatural, and in course of time she would be unhappy. But the young man she should marry will admire her: bring out the best in her: encourage her; and in course of time what she must learn will be taught her by her sons and daughters. The daughters will criticize her and the sons will force her to be different. By that time she will be ready to change — and in the background there will always be her husband to tell her, when they find themselves alone, that he liked her best as she was, and things as they used to be. And if she had not been so happy young she would never have such fine boys and girls, and it is her boys and girls — girls par-

ticularly — who are going to make England. Now let us see the little niece — I am rather blind — I cannot see her face at a distance."

Marcus called "Shan't" and Mrs. Sloane smiled. This Marcus did not see. He was rearranging the skirts of Shan't: pulling up her socks; arranging her hair, so that some of it at least showed under her hat; then he patted her generally, as any mother might have done.

"Well?" said the elderly woman.

"Oh!" said Shan't, beaming.

Marcus was delighted to see how quickly they made friends. Every one took to Shan't.

He turned and found the dark-eyed girl coming towards him — shyly advancing. She was certainly too self-conscious. "My mother says we should be so pleased if you would come shrimping with us this afternoon and come to supper afterwards." She had made the great advance; Marcus would have retreated, but he had been caught unprepared; he hesitated, seeking an excuse. The first that presented itself to him was that his legs were too pale, as Shan't's had been: the next that he did n't shrimp.

"But you must have supper somewhere?" she suggested.

Marcus could not say that as a rule he did not have it anywhere, so he said — "Oh, thank you — "

"Then you *will?*"

While Marcus was talking to the girl the elderly woman stooped forward — and drew Shan't towards her. "Shan't, darling," she said, "don't tell Uncle Marcus I know you. For a joke, let's pretend."

"Let's!" said Shan't, enchanted. She required no more than a hint, and when Marcus came back, deeply engaged to supper, he found the two talking — making conversation.

"Have you many children?" asked Shan't, sitting down on an inverted tin bucket.

"No — I have no children."

"That's — a pity, is n't it?"

"Yes — it's a great pity."

"No boys — not one? Perhaps you've forgotten — ? You might have one or two — perhaps in the toy cupboard — "

"Not one."

"Oh, dear — I hope your little dog is quite well?"

"Thank you very much — but my little dog is dead."

"Oh, dear — I *am* surprised — they don't generally — but the gooseberries are very good this year, at least I think they are."

"Excellent," said the elderly lady; "I have never seen better."

"And the red — currants are rather good," said Shan't.

"Excellent."

"Do you paddle often?" asked Shan't.

"No, I have just had influenza."

"Oh, dear — that's rather a pity."

"It is, is n't it?"

"It *is* — what shall I say next?" she whispered.

"You must n't whisper," said Marcus; "it is n't polite."

"I think — I'll just go — and look for — c-rabs," said Shan't, getting pink.

"Do," said the elderly woman. "A most intelligent child," she added, turning to Marcus, "but why does she wear shoes and socks and a hat?"

"Ought she not?" asked Marcus anxiously.

"She would be happier without — but leave her now. Tell me about her."

"She's a curious child in some ways — the way she makes friends, surely, is unusual; and her conversation with you — rather advanced for a child of her age, is n't it?"

"Most unusual."

"It's not dangerous, is it?"

"I see no possible danger in her talking to me."

"No; I mean she is n't too clever for her age, is she?"

"She is so much with you — is n't she?"

Marcus smiled — "Oh, I did n't mean that."

That evening Mrs. Sloane wrote a letter and it ran as follows:

DEAREST ELSIE, — I have met the ogre. He's really rather an ingratiating ogre and the most attentive of uncles. He is delightful with Shan't. He is taken for a widower with his little girl. One dark-eyed siren has already tried to enchant him. I have interfered. The girl is much too good for him, and in other ways unsuitable. He could n't make her happy and she certainly would make him very unhappy. He would be in no danger at all if he were not bored and the mother managing. I don't see, Elsie, why you should dislike him. He does n't know that I know you. Amusing, is n't it? Shan't and I are in the secret. She plays up splendidly — makes conversation and asks me how many children I have. She seems very happy and quite at home. She is too heavily hatted and stoutly shod, but I have interfered there, too. To me the uncle seems wasted. He should marry. I should make friends, if I were you.

To which Elsie wrote back that she was perfectly friendly towards Mr. Maitland. It was he who was impossible. She certainly could n't make advances. He had been very rude and very selfish about

Diana. Diana, dear child, was very loyal to him and never said anything against him. Shan't, of course, childlike, would be fond of any one who indulged her.

The elderly woman lay back in her chair and laughed when she read Elsie's letter. Elsie was perfectly friendly towards the poor uncle. What would she be if she were unfriendly?

X

It takes an engineer to dam a river: a mere man may stem the tide of a child's crying, and if he can't there is always the woman waiting; it's her job.

"HORRIBLE!" thought Marcus as he made his way towards the house where lodged the girl and her mother, and he supposed her brothers and sisters. Supper? And shrimps for supper? The shrimps he had been asked to shrimp for? Why had Shan't got him into this difficulty?

It was her fault. If she had been less get-at-able, less ready with her all-embracing smile, he would never have known the girl and her mother. If Sibyl had n't married Eustace Carston this could never have happened.

Arrived at the house Marcus found the door wide open. He knocked on it with his stick and viciously broke a blister in the paint which took him back to the joys of boyhood. Out rushed a small boy — exactly the kind of small boy he should have expected. A boy covered with sand — his hair full of it — his knees sandy — his stockings held sand in every rib.

"Hullo! You have come, then? Mum said you would funk it at the last moment."

"Did she?" asked Marcus. Was here an excuse he could seize —

"Come in — the teapot 's on the table."

Marcus followed the sandy boy into a room that seemed full to overflowing — of the girl's relations. They all had great big eyes, some brown, some blue: all too big. Their cheeks were too pink — they were all horribly healthy. It was just the sort of family she would belong to. The girl detached herself from a crowd gathered round what they chose to call an aquarium, to make much of Marcus — to put him at his ease. She wore a pink blouse and was quite free from sand. Her cheeks were flushed, but that might come from shrimping. She was a little too pleased to see him, and a little too grateful to him for coming. Perhaps she knew how much he was suffering. She must know he was n't accustomed to this kind of thing. He thought of Diana. How would she look in the midst of this family? Delightfully cool, he knew, and tremendously amused. She would love to see him being made a fuss of by the wrong kind of people.

The sandy boy, having given his sister her chance, proceeded to take his and monopolized Mr. Maitland.

Marcus thought in despair that the tea, if ever possible at this hour, must by now be quite undrinkable. The sandy boy had a crab in water to

show Mr. Maitland, and a starfish imprisoned — it had died — and there were jellyfish in a bucket — jellyfish of all pets the least likely to move Marcus to enthusiasm. He tried to be interested — was beginning to like the small boy a little — when the mother came and told Sandy to leave Mr. Maitland alone.

"Why should Rose have him?" asked the sandy boy, defiantly.

"Sandy, you scamp," said his mother, "what nonsense you talk!"

"It *is n't* — you *said* — we were to leave Rosie with Mr. Maitland — "

"Sandy, Sandy, where do you expect to go to — ?"

"*When?* Well — you said, we were to leave him" — nodding in Marcus's direction — "to Rosie — it comes to the same thing."

"Are you interested in old things, Mr. Maitland?" asked Mrs. Madder.

Marcus said he was — in some old things.

"We are always on the lookout — this is a sweet little print, is n't it?" She held out a cheaply framed, hand-coloured print for his inspection.

Marcus looked at it and asked where she had got it.

"Oh, that's telling," she answered playfully; "the man said it was a bargain, though I don't

think even he knew its true value. What do you think I gave for it?"

Marcus said he had no idea. Mrs. Madder challenged him to guess, but did not wait to hear whether he made a good guess or not. He must see the quaintest little bit of china she had bought! Was he jealous? That it was quaint Marcus could say with perfect truth — with less truth that he was very jealous.

"It's such fun collecting, is n't it?" she asked impetuously. She was terribly impetuous and inclined to be playful.

He admitted it was — great — fun.

"And it does n't cost much, if you know!"

Marcus said no doubt she was right, it was a question of knowledge, and he sat with the china woolly lamb in his hands, with his thoughts on that horrible teapot.

"Is n't supper ready?" asked some one.

"Ages ago," said the sandy boy; "I simply yelled that the teapot was on the table."

"You should have said it louder," suggested another.

Marcus was put next to Rosie; Mrs. Madder explaining that there was no need for ceremony; besides, she was so busy with the teapot she would n't be able to amuse Mr. Maitland: — and Auntie was deaf, so she liked to have her next her,

so that she could repeat the jokes to her. "Here, Auntie! Next to me; I will tell you if Mr. Maitland says anything amusing."

On the other side of Marcus sat a man who, gathering that Mr. Maitland was interested in old things, told him of all the cheap places he knew in London — and after having done that, told him most of the contents of a shilling hand-book on "How to collect anything, and everything." It was most interesting — only a shilling! He would lend it to Mr. Maitland.

Mr. Maitland said he had hardly time to collect everything. The man smiled and said it did not mean "everything" literally, naturally, and he was hurt and refused to talk any more. Gratefully Marcus turned to the quiet Rose at his other side who had nothing to teach him, but a generous sympathy to offer any one. She was ready to be sorry about anything — sorry that he would n't have any more tea — no more lobster salad? Well, blanc-mange, then? Not with strawberry jam? Well — sardines? Shrimps, then? Shrimps, he *must*, because they were the shrimps he ought to have caught.

No, nothing, Marcus assured her. He had dined — suppered — he had had quite enough.

"We make cocoa when we come in," said Rose, beaming at him.

Here at least was certain comfort and something to look forward to.

"Come in from where?" he asked.

"Oh, we just go out and wander about — it's so delicious — you will — won't you? It's too hot to stay indoors, is n't it?"

"Much too hot."

"Before you go out, Rosie," said her mother, "just play Mr. Maitland that dear little Berceuse — Tum-ti tum- ti tum — you know."

"Oh, no, mother."

"Oh, no," said Marcus.

"Don't you like music?" she asked, surprised, men so often did.

"I have never —"

"Well you should hear Rosie. I'm sure you would like it — but I'm afraid the piano has n't been tuned — "

"Please don't, mother!"

"After all we have paid for you, Rosie! Rosie!"

"Some other time," pleaded Marcus; "it's so hot indoors."

"Do you find it hot? Sandy, let Mr. Maitland sit next the door; there, do move, Mr. Maitland! Auntie, make room for Mr. Maitland and Rosie." She shook her head, "She can't hear. Well, shall we go out, then?"

Marcus stepped out into the fresh, cool air with

a sigh of deepest thankfulness. Even the girl who trod the red-bricked path beside him he could forgive for daring to fall in love with him. The mother for trying to catch him he should never forgive; but there was something attractive about Rosie. "Shall we sit here?" she asked when they reached the sands. He would rather she had left it to him to choose the place; but in full view of the whole watering-place and that a favourite one, there should be no immediate danger. Under the shelter of a rock they sat. Yes — she was attractive — he could see no reason why she should marry as the old lady in the bath-chair had imagined she should. Surely there must be something between Marcus Maitland and that other man? Rose knew how to be quiet, which was a great thing in woman. — She stuck out her feet. Her shoes? Bad shape; and her stockings? They were n't quite right. He did n't see what was wrong exactly — unless it was that the other sides of the seams showed through — but still she was very attractive: her simplicity was engaging. Well-shaped shoes were after all a matter — a question of money.

"It's funny you should be Mr. Maitland, is n't it?" she said, digging her heels into the soft sand and looking up at him under her long, dark eyelashes.

"It would be far funnier if I was not — funnier to me, at all events."

"Yes, of course: you are so amusing, are n't you?"

"Am I? I don't think so." He was open to conviction.

"Yes, you are — I'm serious — don't you think you are?"

"Amusing?"

"Yes."

"I never thought so."

"Well, you are — and I'm sure you are — kind too!"

"Are you, why?" Unconsciously, perhaps, Marcus put on the kindest face in the world — an absurd face it was, but Rose was looking the other way.

"You look it," she said softly.

Marcus said she had said he looked so many things, amongst them a widower.

"Oh, I am so glad you are not that." The tragic eyes were turned upon him — they were positively wells of deep thankfulness.

"Why?" He was terrified — yet, fascinated, he must know why.

She said she would have hated him to be unhappy.

"But," — he was getting very uncomfortable: he wished Shan't would come and bury him in the sand, as she was wont to do — deep, deep, deep.

"But," he went on desperately, "I might not have been unhappy — "

" Not if your wife had died? I should have hated that — I mean I should hate you to be — shallow. I know you would have been heart-broken: I should wish you to be." That settled it, once and for all —

"Why?" Marcus felt he was now paddling in pathos. He saw himself a widower walking to church with a child on either side: their hands in his.

"Because I want you to think rather wonderfully of marriage — and married life."

Marcus said hastily that he could not think of them at all.

"Why — you must — for my sake. You will — if I ask you to."

"Because there are reasons" (there were none, of course) "I can never marry."

"I — am — so sorry — " There was a terrific silence — an impossible silence.

She broke it gently — broke it as softly as the waves broke upon the sands. "But you won't mind if I do?"

"My dear child, of course not — do you want to?" This was a marvellous way out.

She said, Yes, but she could not do it without him.

He asked what he had to do with it, and she said, "More than you know," which he was willing enough to admit! — So far as he could see he had nothing to do with it.

"Much more than you know," she repeated.

She drew up her feet. They were very pretty slim feet, he discovered. He liked the shoes even, except that they were white. He did n't really like white shoes. She clasped her hands round her knees. He liked her hands, particularly liked them. They were long and delightfully brown. He did n't mind brown hands — not a bit — at the seaside.

"Whom do you want to marry?" he asked, feeling a sudden rush of tenderness towards this dark-eyed girl, and a slight resentment towards the man she would marry. This girl had found him both sympathetic and amusing. If Diana thought him amusing she would never tell him so.

"That's the curious part of the whole thing — I heard from some one this morning."

"The some one?" said Marcus, with marvellous intuition. He really was sympathetic, he felt the glow of it himself.

"Yes, and he said you were here — "

"Why did he say that?" What business had any one to say Marcus Maitland was anywhere — even if he were? He hated his movements discussed.

"Because you are, I suppose."

"Yes, yes, of course. But how does he know?"

"He's in your office — is n't it extraordinary?"

"Very — and what is he in my office? And my office, by the way, is so little mine. I have left the business — "

"Yes — I know! It's rather a pity, from our point of view."

"It was hardly worth the trouble of getting to know me?" suggested Marcus.

"No — I don't mean that — but although he does n't see you now, he knew you in America — he was sent over there for a year or two — "

"What position does he hold?"

"He's getting on very well — for his age wonderfully well — but I thought if you could just tell me what his prospects are — I might tell my mother — and she would give her consent, I am sure — if I could just say he was getting on wonderfully well — and — "

"What's his name?"

"Flueyn — pronounced Flynn — he said you never got it right."

"Does he? I'm sorry. Flueyn? Why, he's a most excellent fellow. I remember him."

"Will — he — get on?"

"Yes — of course — bound to — "

"How — much a year will he get on?"

Marcus thought for a moment — Flueyn — ex-

cellent chap — fine big fellow — he had rather a terrible laugh: too boisterous in private life, he should say. But he did n't know him in private life — no question of knowing him — very good worker — very keen — it was quite possible he would get on. But why did this girl want to marry him?

"How — much — ?" The tragic eyes were turned upon him; they were pleading eyes, dangerous eyes — the red lips trembled a little — dangerous too — very. How much was going to make such a tremendous difference — the hands tensely clasped said that: the eyes clouded expressed that — the parted lips meant that.

"Of course — I would do anything within my power — but I am not in a — "

"Don't say that."

"Don't cry — it will be all right — tell your mother it will be all right — don't thank me."

"How *can* I thank you?"

"By not thanking me — Flueyn's an excellent chap — no, I won't come and have cocoa, thank you. I never drink it at night. You will be all right? Then you will forgive me if I go home; I have letters to write. I won't forget, only don't build on it — because — "

"I have built — it's finished — all but the roof."

Marcus looked at her — there were tears in her

eyes. "Please don't look so — happy," he said; "it frightens me."

On his way back to the hotel, he called in to see Mrs. Sloane. She was delighted to see him and to hear his news.

"Tell me all about it — begin at the very beginning. Tell me first about the young man."

"He's very big and I should say wonderfully healthy: has lots of hair — fair! It stands on end at the slightest provocation. He laughs, I should imagine, tremendously. Out of office hours he would be boisterous, I am sure of that — but none of her family will mind — 'Auntie' would n't hear him if he was n't. He plays games, I believe — I don't know what else to tell you. You see I did n't know him — I did n't even know how to pronounce his name."

" But you ought to have known him. He sounds so eminently desirable."

"For her — yes, but he would jar upon you a thousand times a day."

"That would be my fault — it's a bad thing for a woman when she grows too fragile, too exotic, to stand a boisterous laugh. You are very gentle, my friend, to an old woman. . . . I told Shan't I felt very old to-day, and she said, so kindly: 'You're not so old as Moses would have been if he had lived.'"

She put out her hand and Marcus took it and held it as delicately and as carefully as he would have held a vase of the Ming period.

"The Flueyns must be happy," she said. "You will see that they are."

"I have very little influence — really."

"Is that quite true?"

"Not quite."

Mrs. Sloane said that was rather a comfort to her because she had a confession to make. She had not been quite — well, truthful herself. Marcus was a little alarmed. He could not imagine an elderly woman in a bath-chair departing in any way from the path of goodness and righteousness. He asked what she had to confess and asked it so charmingly that she vowed he had missed his vocation in life. "You would forgive so nicely," she explained.

"Hardly as nicely as you would tell a — lie," he suggested.

"A lie is perhaps a little too strong — no, I suppose it's not — I led you to believe I did not know Shan't, whereas I know her very well: and of course I know Elsie. I live in Bestways, and I have known her for a long time, and the longer I know her the better I love her. Now, am I forgiven?"

"The best thing I have heard of her is that you are her friend," said Marcus.

"How nice of you — to tell an untruth so charmingly! But tell me why you dislike each other so much? It was in order to find out if Elsie was justified in her ridiculous attitude towards you that I did not tell you who I was."

"Does she really dislike me?" asked Marcus. "Why should she? I have never done anything to her."

Mrs. Sloane asked him if he had n't made the children rather fond of him.

"But surely she could n't mind that?"

"Why do you dislike her?"

"I don't; but she is always trying to keep the children away from me."

"I see very little difference between you," said Mrs. Sloane; and after what she had said about Elsie, Marcus was obliged to say he was glad of that.

When Marcus reached the hotel he was met by the hall porter, who astonished him by saying: "I 'm a family man myself, sir, you will excuse me — but will you go upstairs at once? I was told to say — *directly* you came in."

Marcus went upstairs. Over the banisters at each landing hung an anxious housemaid. Each housemaid expressed her relief at seeing him, each begged him to hurry. Each assured him the lift was working. He had been in too great a hurry to

remember the lift. When he got near his room a voice broke upon his ear — a long wail — the cry of one in great distress; the wail spoke loudly of Irish blood in the veins of her who wailed. It was the voice of his niece. Infuriated old women glanced at him through half-opened doors. "What had he been doing gallivanting about at night?" they seemed to say and no doubt they would have liked to add: "If he had left the mother he might at least stay with the child."

"Shan't," he called, "I'm coming." He passed lady's-maids gathered together, and strode into Shan't's room. Then and there he decided that he had never seen a child cry — never imagined a child could cry — not the child of any one belonging to him — as this child cried. It was impossible that anything could cry so terribly. Tears poured down her face: her eyes were screwed up. It was a horrible exhibition showing a deplorable lack of self-restraint.

"Shan't, stop!" He sat down beside her, he shook her gently — nothing made any difference. "I'm here, your Uncle Marcus is here — "

This was why there were people in the world who did n't love children. They had seen them like this.

"I don't want him — I want my darlin' — Aunt Elsie — "

"No, Shan't, you don't. You are at the seaside with your darling uncle."

"I'm — not — I won't be at the seaside. I want my darlin' Aunt Elsie."

"Shan't — listen!" He tried to take her in his arms. She became rigid, unbendable — unbreakable — "Shan't — !"

"I — want — my — darlin' Aunt — Elsie."

The management sent up to say, Would the young lady be quiet? There was an elderly gentleman above her — and an old lady below her — who could get no sleep.

"Shan't — be quiet!"

"Nasty Uncle Marcus!"

"Shan't — listen — "

But she refused to listen — she wriggled away under the bedclothes.

"What do you want, Shan't?"

She emerged from under the bedclothes.

"I want my darlin' Aunt Elsie."

"But you can't have her — she's miles away. Would you like the kind lady who played with you on the sands?"

"She's dead!" cried Shan't — wailing afresh.

"No — she's not. Look here, will you be good if I fetch her?"

"Will she bring my darlin' crab — what was on the sands — ?"

"Yes — yes — "

"W—ill — you fet-ch — her?"

"Yes."

Marcus was off downstairs, three steps at a time — scattering housemaids as he went, out on to the sea-front, and finally reached the Madders' door just as the cocoa was pronounced ready. "Oh, you're just in time!" they all cried, as he came into the room. "Rose, fetch another cup and a spoon; no, you must share spoons."

"What is it?" asked Rose, who was quick to see that something was wrong.

"It's Shan't, she won't go to sleep — she does nothing but cry — will you come — and bring a crab?"

To which unusual request Rose made no objection. "Sandy," she cried, "lend me a crab!"

"All right — there's one under the sofa. Move, will you, Auntie, there's a crab — hold hard — it's in a bucket — it won't bite."

Marcus apologized to the assembled family, begged them to forgive him, did n't wait to be assured of their ready forgiveness, but was off in the wake of Rose. As he had run down the pavement in London after Diana, so he now ran down the red-brick path after Rose. She ran less lightly, perhaps, than Diana had run, but then she was less lightly dressed. She ran just as fast — horribly

fast. His life had become a restless and strenuous one. Arrived at the hotel he and Rose went up in the lift. He noticed the water from the pail streaming down the front of her skirt; he never thought of the poor crab as he tried to dry it. She begged him not to; he must n't wet his handkerchief. He said it was already wet with the tears of Shan't — soaked!

They found Shan't sitting up in bed. The storm was passing; the waves of her sobs were breaking — the moaning of the outgoing tide was still to be heard. Rose was on her knees beside the bed, and in one moment her arms were round the child. Marcus turned away; he could not have said why, except that somehow or other he felt as if it were Flueyn's right before any other man's to see Rose as she looked now — altogether adorable like this — he had never seen her so desirable.

He felt he ought not to be listening to the crooning of that voice, even to the absurd things she was saying — they were women's secrets he was overhearing; he was a listener on the threshold of a door he had deliberately closed in his life.

After the storm there came peace. Shan't was whispering: every now and then came the backwash of a sob — but peace followed it. He seemed to see the golden reflection of the setting sun on

the wet sands. Shan't was putting her fingers in and out of the button-holes in the girl's knitted coat and was smiling up into her face. Rose was wiping away the tears from the child's face. Shan't was shyly promising to be good — never to cry any more? She nodded. Rose persuaded her to lie down. Shan't insisted that she must say good-night to the crab. This was accomplished — poor crab! She must then pray for the crab and for all little crabs. This was done. By degrees she fell asleep, and until Rose was quite certain that nothing would awaken her she knelt beside her. Marcus watched her for a moment, then turned away and walked to the window. He felt lonely. There was silence except for the sound of the waves breaking on the shore beneath the window, very softly. The world, with Shan't, had fallen gently to sleep and the waves sang a lullaby.

"She's all right," whispered Rose; "there will be some one near if she wakes?"

Marcus nodded.

"Then I shall go home — give me that poor crab."

Marcus was afraid it was dead. Rose said all Sandy's pets died young. They walked back to the lodgings together, in silence.

At the door he stopped. "I can't thank you," he said.

"There's nothing to thank me for — I love children."

"There is one thing I want to say — it will be all right with Flueyn."

He asked her not to thank him, he said there was nothing to thank him for. She laughed, then added shyly, "How little you know!"

XI

A dog may be a dog and something more;
A man beside a dog may be a bore!

SHAN'T had gone back to her aunt. Diana was with her aunt and Marcus was alone. He felt the position to be an absurd one. Why should he be separated from two nieces because an aunt, on the other side, chose to behave in a jealous and absurd manner? It was quite possible, if he could see the aunt, that she might in talking tell him, quite unconsciously, if Diana were in love or not? It was ridiculous he should n't know, if he wished to know — and if she knew. With all her faults the aunt, no doubt, was fond of the children. Why should n't he go down and see her? So he got a Bradshaw and looked up trains — he would have gone by car, but he had told Diana that Tooke was n't — what had he said? — strong enough to do the distance? He forgot what he had said, he had been vexed at the time — and he found it was possible to get to the aunt by twelve o'clock on any morning, so why not to-morrow? He should write to say he was coming — no, he would take her by surprise; see her as she really was.

When a woman deliberately sets out to weed on a summer's day she will know, if she has any imag-

ination, that her face will be likely to redden under the exertion, be it wonted or unwonted; further, that she will not be looking her best if her niece's uncle should chance to call upon her. Elsie Carston's imagination might have gone so far as to expect a red face under given circumstances, but never a visit, under any, from Diana's disagreeable uncle. Yet this thing happened. Her small parlour-maid came to tell her so. She whispered it, hoarse from suppressed excitement. She vowed he was standing looking "amazed-like" at the "blue vawse."

"Tell him," said Elsie, "he must wait till my face is less red" — never dreaming that Rebecca would be so silly; but Rebecca was. She went back to the drawing-room and she said, "Miss Carston is so red in the face, sir, will you please to wait?"

And Marcus, if not pleased, waited. He had kept people waiting himself, and never for a more excellent reason. He hated women with red faces. That was one of Diana's greatest charms — the unvarying beauty of her complexion. Ah — Diana? Where was she — and Shan't, too? Why did n't the tiresome aunt come? A bumptious woman is not complete unless she has a red face — a danger signal; so she might just as well come as she was, as she always was, and would always be.

The moments crept on — still he waited. He paced up and down the room until he was giddy, and he felt for the bears in the Zoo as he had never felt before. He realized the daily round of their discomfort now. This, then, was where Diana lived: with this furniture? Well, it was n't bad — of its kind. It was rough, of course. The grandfather's clock, that ticked so insistently, must have stood in a deaf cottager's kitchen. The gate-legged table had been undoubtedly cursed by many a lusty farmer and his sons for the multitude and distribution of its legs.

The furniture was well kept. There was that to the aunt's credit, or to her servants'. He wondered if she had any more like the absurd creature who had conveyed, with the utmost solemnity, that ridiculous message. There could n't be such another in the world.

Back to the blue vase. It seemed familiar. Ridiculous place to keep it — on a bracket — meaningless. The Staffordshire china? Rubbish. How easily women were taken in! So long as the piece was an imbecile lamb or an impossible cottage, she was satisfied. No doubt she had bought the lamb because it was a "duck," and the cottage because it was a "lamb." He could hear her. She had been wise to keep to white walls. If she had attempted colour she must have gone wrong. He liked the

chintz. It was in keeping. Red flowers on a highly glazed surface.

Why did n't she come? It was the worst form of discourtesy to keep any one waiting. Where had she got the mezzotints? Or rather how? Left to her by a relative who had bought them cheap years ago, anticipating their value. She would tell him so — tiresome! He did n't care how she had got them. They were nice enough, though. First state, eh? Open letters? He walked from one to the other. Cut edges? Here was one with the margin nibbled by a mouse — just what he should have expected to happen to the print belonging to a red-faced woman. Needlework pictures? Quite amusing! Country-house sale, he suspected: and a Downman? People do get these things somehow or other. She had withstood the lure of the hand-coloured print. Books? What did the woman read? He was on all fours trying to discover when the door opened and to his intense astonishment he heard a woman's voice say, "Lie down, Marcus!" He rose instead — anything rather than obey — and found himself face to face with Aunt Elsie. What had been the use of waiting? Her face was still red.

"I'm so sorry," she said, "I forgot; do forgive me — Marcus is my dog."

Grey eyes! They looked at him, and he remembered that years ago they had distinctly said:

"Beaten!" They challenged him now — "Goth!" it was coming back to him; "Vandal! — nice, grey-eyed woman — ignorant woman!" he repeated to himself. "Your gloves," he said involuntarily.

"You would think I never wore them," she said, holding out her sunburnt, shapely hands for his inspection, "but I do."

"You wore them then — and the wrong kind. That's what I so disliked about you. You took that vase in gloved hands — dogskin-gloved hands — "

"Oh, it was you, was it?" said Elsie. "You looked so angry and I could n't explain — I knew it was n't a good vase — yes, I did — "

"Then why — "

"Forgive me one moment, there's Dinah — "

"Oh," said Marcus, "delightful — " thinking she had said Diana.

"No, Dinah — my dog — she's got Marcus's ball, she knows she must n't — please wait — if Peggy comes in, send her to her dinner, will you?"

"How? What shall I do?"

"Just say, 'Marky's got Peggy's dinner' — and she'll fly!"

Off went Aunt Elsie, leaving Marcus to deal with Peggy — another dog, he supposed. "Marky's got Peggy's dinner!" He was hanged if he would say it. A moment later the door opened and Rebecca

looked in: "You have n't got Peggy, have you, sir?"

Marcus said he had not.

"She's so excited at your coming, sir, she was tearing round the lawn like mad, just now — here she is!" Peggy tore into the room; tore round it two or three times, slipping, skidding on rugs, as she went. "Call her!" said Marcus.

"It's no use, sir, not till she's got accustomed to the excitement of you — "

"Tell her 'Marky has got her lunch,' or dinner; whatever meal you like to call it."

"It would n't be any use, sir, not when she's wild over your coming like she is now."

When Elsie came back, she had the grace to apologize, but it was evident she had no idea how badly she had behaved, or how impossible the dogs had been. Marcus thought that dogs must, at least, be obedient. Elsie said she was really very sorry, and as she spoke she marshalled the dogs and sent them off to their various dinners: then she came back, looked at him, and said he was exactly what she had always known he was.

"What is that?" he asked: it was rash of him to ask.

"Frightfully obstinate, for one thing."

"And what else?"

"Heaps of things — but about this vase — an

old lady I was very fond of sent me up to buy that vase for her — *if* it had a mark upon it that she had made as a girl — a scratch. If it had not, I was not to buy it."

Marcus said he was bewildered, he did not understand.

"You will if you listen," said Elsie. "Her father had a collection of Chinese porcelain and he sold it. One piece, she told him, had been given to her, when she was a girl, by a young man with whom she was in love. Her father disputed her claim, and the vase was sold with the rest of the collection. She was middle-aged then. When she heard the collection was to be sold again — it was forty years since her father had parted with it, and she had grown to be a very old woman — she wanted to buy back that one piece."

"Feminine persistence," said Marcus.

"Yes, if you like to call it that — I suppose a man may call a woman's faithfulness by any name he likes."

"Did you find the mark?" asked Marcus meekly; he was always cowed by feminine firmness.

Elsie looked at him, and a doubt entered his mind. He asked if he might look at the vase — hold it in his hand?

She handed it to him. He looked at it, then at her. "You were to buy it, if there was a scratch upon it?"

Elsie nodded. He handed her back the vase.

"But — she — died happy," Elsie said, perhaps pleading extenuating circumstances.

There was a silence while she replaced the vase on the bracket.

"You gave too much for it," said Marcus, refusing to be beaten, or to be made to say wrong was right — or to be touched by the thought of the foolish old lady who had been taken in — so kindly.

"How do you know?" asked Elsie. "What, after all, was too much to pay for a thing she wanted, that would make her happy? She could afford to pay. Anyhow, she left the vase to me and I put it there." She nodded to the bracket on the wall.

"A very bad place for it."

"I like it there," said Elsie, and Marcus knew he had been right; pig-headed and obstinate was Diana's aunt.

"Where is Diana?" he asked.

"She's reading aloud Mr. Watkins's poems."

"To whom?"

"To Mr. Watkins — she says he reads them in a family-prayer sort of a voice that lends them a fictitious value. She wants him to hear what they sound like read by an ordinary person."

Of course, Marcus at once said Diana was not an ordinary person, and Elsie could only answer that she read poetry like a very ordinary person.

"This man is in love with her, I suppose?" asked Marcus gloomily.

"If she has read him his 'Ode to Japonica,' I should say not."

"He was in love with her, then?" persisted the enquiring uncle.

"Of course."

"Why of course?"

"Is n't every man in love with her?"

"And she — is she in love with any man?"

"Ah, that is the question," said Elsie. The relations between them, which had become surprisingly easier, were again strained. She was the aunt on the one side — he the uncle on the other. Rebecca announced luncheon.

"I suppose we must eat," said Marcus.

Elsie did n't suppose anything about it; as a matter of fact there was no necessity, but she led the way to the dining-room, and there at the table sat Diana.

"Dears!" she exclaimed, when she saw her uncle and aunt; "getting so heated talking about me — how do you like each other now you meet? Have I exaggerated the charm of either of you? You both think so? Well, darlings, sit down. No, Elsie, you must do the honours and I'll do the laughing and the crying, if you like — but there must be no more fighting. Look at your faces." And she

handed to each one a spoon. Elsie passed hers on to Marcus. He laid them both down beside his plate.

"Is my face red too?" he asked, turning to Diana.

"Is that quite how you meant to put it?" she asked; and he was obliged to answer, "Not quite."

Shan't was out; she had gone to spend the day with some children in the neighbourhood and she would n't be back till after tea. After tea seemed a long way off to Marcus. Could he make Aunt Elsie and her garden and her ridiculous farm last till then? Diana was too distressed; she was engaged to play golf with Mr. Pease.

"Don't bother about me," said Marcus stiffly.

Diana had no intention of bothering about him. He had come to see Elsie, not her. It was so important they should make friends. If she stayed with them, they would both try, each one, to talk to her more than the other.

"And when are you coming back to me, Diana?" asked Marcus.

Diana looked from Marcus to Elsie and from Elsie to Marcus.

"You are such unselfish darlings, both of you," she answered. "You must decide between you."

Here was Elsie's opportunity. "I think, perhaps,

Diana," she said, " you ought to go to your uncle — your mother left you with him." And Elsie knew that, in the eyes of Diana, she must stand on the heights above Marcus — that Marcus must look up to her.

But Marcus despised her. He knew she had done it to impress Diana, and did n't mean it.

" I would n't ask you to come back to London at this time of year," he said gently.

"You are both darlings," said Diana, and she went and left them.

And Elsie talked calmly of the joys of the country — mentioning incidentally the heat of London pavements, and Marcus said nothing, but he thought the more. Elsie now looked quite cool: her complexion was fair, and that, in conjunction with her grey eyes, made her look younger than she ought to have looked, or than he had expected her to look.

He spun out his visit till tea-time, and after tea Elsie volunteered to walk to the station with him. "We may meet Shan't," she said.

They walked and they met Shan't. She was being escorted home by a family of boys and girls, and was among those who filled a pony-cart to overflowing. She was rioting; no other word described the joy that possessed her. She was playing mad bulls with a boy a little smaller than herself.

Elsie called her to stop: besought her to speak to her Uncle Marcus — but she could n't listen — she was laughing — how she laughed! Marcus had a train to catch — and the pony-cart passed on, Shan't still fighting the small boy — and laughing — so happy and Uncle Marcus was so neglected.

"She did n't realize it was you," said Aunt Elsie. "Children so soon forget."

She might have spared him that thrust which he had not the strength to parry. She might have known that no child who is playing mad bulls with a little boy, sufficiently mad, will stop to look at an elderly uncle — or to listen to an — *elderly* aunt.

In the train Marcus comforted himself by picturing a scene in which he and Shan't made it up. He said, " Why did n't you stop and speak to your Uncle Marcus?"

And Shan't said, " Well, you see, darlin'," — her fingers popped in and out of the button-holes of his coat, — " I was so busy — I really did n't — quite properly see it was you."

" But you were glad to see me — what you did see of me?"

" Of course — I was — did n't you *think* I was?"

Uncle Marcus had n't been sure.

" Let's play at somethin'," suggested Shan't.

He felt comforted — a little. Two arms were

round his neck, and he felt as nearly comforted as it is possible to feel when the comforting arms are not real arms and the child is not a real child, and nothing is real but the hurt the *real* child inflicted.

XII

An old man cried, "Umbrella to sell." It had no handle. He met an old woman who cried she had an umbrella to sell, but only the handle. Each called what they had an umbrella, but only the man's could keep off the rain.

THERE is a small book, written by one of the greatest masters of fiction. No romance stirs the blood, excites the imagination of weary men, as this book does. Lever, Dumas, Hugo are pigmies compared to this giant among story-tellers.

It is a small book — no matter its colour — its pages number some hundreds, and they can be read, re-read, and read yet again. On every page is the same story differently, and delightfully told. It never palls. A wise woman is she who, seeing her husband tired and perhaps bored, slips into his hands this volume of immortal prose. If he be a sportsman, his chair comfortable, and the fire brightly burning, all his worries will vanish like "smoke" on the hillside, and for the space of some hours he will be at peace, tramping once again the moors, fishing the rivers, the lochs, and climbing the hills he loves. Marcus, lonely and deserted, opened the book and read:

£600: Exceptionally good shooting. Average bag 245 brace grouse. Lodge contains dining-room, drawing-room, ten

bedrooms, bathroom, and complete offices. Hotel, post, telegraph, quite close. Nearest station twenty-five miles. Very bracing climate and lovely scenery. Proprietor pays — etc.

£500: Beautiful lodge, four and a half miles from station. Contains 4 public rooms, 6 bedrooms, bathroom, and ample servants' accommodation. Stabling, coach house. Kennels, gardens, 5000 acres, shooting yielding 80 brace grouse, 3000 rabbits, 100 hares, 200 brace partridges, 100 snipe, 200 pheasants, 20 duck, roe deer and plover, woodcock. Good trout fishing in lochs and burns. Salmon fishing can be had.

£450: 10,000 acres, mostly moorland, yielding about 250 brace grouse (limit), four stags, besides other game. Good woodcock and snipe and wild fowl shooting, in winter. Exclusive right to the fishing in whole of river, six miles, both banks. And in one of the finest lochs in Scotland, which holds sea trout and occasionally a salmon. Lodge situated in the midst of magnificent scenery —

Marcus leant forward and re-filled his pipe — the shadow of a great peace in his eyes — a smile playing at the corners of his mouth. He had no wish to be disturbed — let Shan't stay with her aunt, and Diana, too, if she wanted to — it was like the old game of Oranges and Lemons. They could choose; he was Oranges —

Last season's bag — 6 stags, 200 brace grouse, 20 wild fowl, 111 hares, and 90 sea trout —

He sighed and turned the pages.

£2000: Splendid sporting domain, yielding 80 or 84 stags, 500 brace grouse and there are also roe deer, hares, wild

fowl, salmon and sea trout. Fishing in river from both banks, also trout fishing in well-known loch and excellent trout fishing in many hill lochs — good sea fishing [this for Pillar]. Very comfortable lodge situated at the head of one of the finest lochs in Scotland, amidst magnificent scenery — 20 miles from station. Post and telegraph close by. Lodge contains — hall, drawing-room, dining-room, smoking-room, gun room, ample bedroom accommodation, two bathrooms, complete offices. Proprietor pays —

"Not much," murmured Marcus.

£250.

£200.

£270.

£300: — each in its small way buying for August and September perfect happiness, and Marcus knew what that perfect happiness might be. Agents say much, sometimes more than they need, but do they ever say anything of six o'clock in the morning, on the moor, when the spiders' webs, set with diamonds, are slung from one tuft of heather to another, making a wealth of jewels of untold value? Do they ever describe the joy of walking home knee-deep in scented purple heather right into the setting sun, after a day on the hill? Do they ever describe a fine day on the West Coast, as the West Coast alone knows it? A fine day in Skye? No day, for pure glory of fineness, can compare with it. (And it might always be fine in Skye if people

really believed in fairies.) Skye paints her foreground as no other foreground is painted, so rich in colour, so deep — so varied. No skies can vie with hers in blueness, when they are blue. No distance is so enchanting in its softness. No breeze so caressing in its gentleness. No hills can compare with the Cuchullins in their splendid ruggedness, and the sun never sets in Scotland, leaving behind him more glorious promises of his coming again than he does in Skye. Do agents count these things? They must — and that is why — if the grouse fail, the deer fade away, and the fish sulk — the man who truly loves his Scotland will always pay his rent without murmuring, for those glorious two months: and the day he gets back to London, if he be a proper man, he will sit himself down in his chair, his hand will reach out to the table at his elbow, and he will take from the table a book that his wife, if she be a wise wife, has placed there, and he will open it at any page and read —

£500 — beau-ti-ful lodge, 40 miles from station — Contains — etc. — bag should include — 250 brace grouse, good woodcock and snipe — wild fowl — in the winter — Exclusive right —

This is the book Marcus read on his return to London after sending Shan't back to the aunt of his detestation. It is a work of fiction that should be in all circulating libraries, yet it is in none. Dur-

ing the reading it came upon him — the inspiration — to offer as a counter-attraction to Bestways — Scotland!

Could Diana resist a moor in Scotland? To shoot over which she might ask any one she liked. What would Aunt Elsie do against a force so overwhelming as this? It was late in the season to get a place, but sometimes late in the day even a good place is to be had. Sometimes the best places might be picked up at the last moment.

The next day Marcus lunched at his club, having interviewed agents both hopeful and depressing. At the club he met a friend plunged in the depths of melancholy. So deeply immersed was he that Marcus rose buoyant on the crest of a wave of exultation. The friend's wife was ill. Marcus, sobered, expressed sympathy: the man, to a certain extent, had brought it on himself by having a wife, but still Marcus was sorry she was ill. Added to that the man had taken a place in Scotland to which he could not go in consequence of his wife's illness and the agents said it was too late to sublet it. Here Marcus was really sympathetic. What sort of a place was it? — and out it all came — the same grand old story. The blood that had run through the veins of Marcus now coursed and by the end of luncheon the moor was practically his — he had walked it. Its geographical position was

scored on the tablecloth: its marches defined by spoons and forks. So much was the place his that he felt justified in telegraphing to Diana — "Got place Scotland, will you come?" What about the hill now upon which Elsie had imagined herself standing looking down upon poor Marcus?

When Diana got the telegram she read it aloud, and Elsie began feebly about a picnic — and more picnics — and a possible dance — and more dances, but Diana's heart was already in the Highlands. "Darling Uncle Man!" she cried. "Delicious old Marky Man!" And Marcus put his head under her hand and swallowed with gratitude. "Not you, you darling, blessed black angel," she said.

"Bribery and corruption," said Aunt Elsie, as she pulled furiously at the weeds in the garden; "pure bribery — it is n't that the child cares for him — she only goes — because she wants to go to Scotland. I shall at least have Dick. He would never desert me." And to make sure of that she went in and wrote to Dick — wrote of cricket matches — wrote in glowing terms, showing an amazing knowledge of the game, which she felt was bound to impress a small nephew. To which letter Dick wrote back:

DEAR AUNT ELSIE, — It's jolly decent of you, but I'm a bit fed up with cricket, and what's more

I might get stale if I played too much, and what's still more to the purpose is that Taboret Major has asked me to go to Scotland. His people have taken a sort of castle there — what d' you say to that? Don't say no and break the heart of your anxious nephew. Taboret Major says it's a rippin' place and there's lots of shooting and fishing. Old Wane says it's a chance that should n't be missed — so I say.

Your loving and hopeful

DICK

P.S. What about my being confirmed next term? Do you think I need? I don't feel much like it at present and Taboret Major is n't going to be because he's going to join the Scotch religion. I expect I shall be converted when I 'm in Scotland, so had I better wait to see? But then I ought to say that Taboret Major is going to wear a kilt. I expect this makes a difference. What do you think?

So even Dick was denied her, and Elsie went out into her garden where the borders were full of blossoms which Diana loved, and into the kitchen garden where grew vegetable marrows, things which Dick had sworn he loved, and the aunt felt she had laboured in vain. She had sown and Uncle Marcus would reap.

XIII

God made the Highlander — then rested.
His finest work was never bested.

IS there any waking up in this world to be compared with the waking up in Scotland after a night spent in the train?

Is there any air so thin and clear as the air one breathes on stepping out to the station platform? Would a man be anywhere else on God's earth? No, not if he be a sportsman and something of a Scotsman. It is not necessary to be more than that to make one eager to claim kinship with every one as one stands for the first time after many months on Scottish ground. Marcus bethought himself of the portrait of an ancestress of his wearing a tartan sash and blessed her for having worn it and for having passed on to him something of her love for the Highlands that had lain in her heart beneath the tartan band.

As Marcus stood on the platform he pointed out to Diana its many beauties. God had willed that there should be no mist that morning — and no veil hung between them and the moor — purpling with promise of deeper things to come. Diana said that, and Marcus enthused in his turn over the

convolvulus that scrambled over the white wooden paling as it scrambles nowhere else: nowhere else, perhaps, is it so worth while scrambling to get over the paling.

"It's good to be alive!" he exclaimed.

"Delicious!" said Diana, sniffing; "is n't it good? How much longer shall we be before we get there?"

Marcus said some hours, but Diana did n't mind how many. The people at the stations interested her; the barefooted, sandy-haired, freckled boys, the barefooted, shy, proud little girls; fisherwomen, old and young, pretty and pretty once upon a time — long ago. She loved the shivering pointers and setters — shivering with excitement only — she knew that — waiting while their masters and men disinterred deeply buried luggage. Stalwart keepers meeting parties interested her and she knew she witnessed the meeting of old friends. She loved the keepers and wondered if Marcus and she would have a nice one of their own? What a thing it is to own for even two months a Scotch keeper! Marcus assured her all keepers in Scotland were nice. They were a race apart — a race of fine gentlemen.

"Darlings," said Diana; "it's a heavenly place." Then she wondered what Glenbossie would be like? And Marcus knew exactly. It would be a smallish house — stucco, whitewashed; it might have a tropæolum growing over the porch. The woodwork

of the house would be painted a clarety brown; there might be strings of convolvulus up the walls, and there would be pegs on which to lay the fishing-rods under the sloping roof.

"It will be a lodge," said Diana with some anxiety; "not a proper house?"

"A lodge, of course; certainly not a proper house."

"It would be horrible if it were a proper house."

"Uncanny, positively," agreed Marcus.

"You will love being uncomfortable, won't you?" asked Diana.

Marcus looked anxious, but smiled as he said, "Yes, of course"; for he knew his Oven and his Pillar.

Pillar came along the train at most stations to tell Mr. Maitland it looked like fine weather and that the luggage was in at the front.

Mrs. Oven never moved. Her heart was sick for her London kitchen and all it contained — its electrical contrivances. She did n't look forward except with dismay to a lodge that was not a proper house. But going to Scotland was an act of madness committed by the best families and it was very expensive. She knew, of course, that people who live in Scotland, whose homes are there, live in the greatest comfort, that the best cooks come from Scotland; it is only of those people who go

from England for two months and live in places they would never think of living in in England, and paying enormous sums to do so, she was thinking.

The scullery-maid refused to look out of the window. She preferred to read. She knew what the country looked like. She had been to Epping Forest twice. Books for her, please! The kitchen-maid was from Skye. She hung out of the window drinking it all in. The housemaid tried to sleep. She was a bad traveller. She had nothing to say against Skye, but as they were n't going there there was no need to think about it. It was beds she was thinking of. The mattresses would n't be "box," she was despondingly certain of that. "Not even spring, I should say," Mrs. Oven said. At one of the stations — a small private station — the train stopped to take up a party of fishermen — a man, a girl, and a boy. The gillies got into the next compartment with the rods and landing-nets. Marcus glanced quickly at Diana. She looked perfectly fresh, tidy, and delightful. Her eyes sparkled. She was hoping Uncle Marcus would speak. She remembered a horrible story he was wont to tell of two men who had lived for twenty years in the same house in Jermyn Street, who had never spoken to each other, although they met constantly on the stairs. He had seemed proud of the story as

illustrating something rather fine in the English character, but now, throwing all Jermyn Street restraint to the winds, he spoke. He asked them what luck they had had. The boy started off to tell him. He took ten minutes to tell how he had lost a fish. The girl, in one, told how she had seen one. The man had got two. Moreover, he prophesied that by tea-time Diana would have got one — if not more — to her own rod. "You are for Glenbossie?" he said to Marcus. And Marcus said he was and that Diana was his niece.

"Nice people," said Diana when they had gone, and Marcus beamed. Where was Aunt Elsie now? Scotland was the place to bring a girl to, of course. What was the good of picnics and dances? English picnics! English dances!

At last they arrived at the station that for two months was to be their own. Marcus had never seemed to care for a station before — had never before patted one on the back, as it were. Diana was amused to see him greet the station-master as his best friend in the world. He looked as though he were longing to tell him how glad he was he had elected to be a station-master. It was delightful to Diana. She had never seen Marcus purring to this extent. She had known him very polite, but this was something far pleasanter, and much funnier. The station-master was his long-lost brother,

that was all. So was the keeper: Macpherson by name: and more of a brother than any — an elder brother — was John. John with a wrinkled face and a twinkle in his eyes. Nature is a wonderful needle-woman when she takes the time and trouble to "gather" an old face. She had made thousands of "gathers" on John's face without in any way spoiling the material, and Diana loved every wrinkle. Most of them stood for smiles and many of them for sunshine. "I shall love John," she confided to Marcus.

"Dear old man," said Marcus, and Diana was further amused. If Scotland could do this for one man — then Scotland forever, for all men. There was a lorry for the luggage — a car for Marcus and Diana, and for the household a kind of a *char-à-banc*, Pillar presiding over all and preventing Marcus from interfering. He showed no excitement. He knew his Scotland; if not one part, then another. They were all the same. In one, less grouse than in another — seldom more: in another, more fishing: scenery more or less the same in all parts. Mountains higher in one part than another — nothing much to choose between them — and midges everywhere. He himself had a weakness for sea-fishing, but would quite understand if Mr. Maitland had forgotten to remember it. In the back of his head he had a shrewd suspicion that

they had come to Scotland for a set purpose — that Scotland was to be the means of marrying Miss Diana — and of defeating Miss Carston. It was always easy to get the right kind of gentlemen to come to Scotland, not that there had been any great difficulty in London, but gentlemen would recklessly face a recognized danger for the chance of a "royal" — whereas for a dinner — well, in London they were cautious. Pillar had an idea, unexpressed, that Miss Diana would prove highly dangerous in Scotland. He had faith — the utmost faith — in her tweeds and boots. She would make no sartorial mistakes — moreover, the more like a boy she looked the better she looked. They arrived at Glenbossie. It was exactly as Marcus had described it: a low, white house set on a hillside; surrounded by moor. On one side was a birch wood; a short distance below the lodge ran the river, getting, of course, lower and lower every minute as rivers will. Where were the rods? Marcus asked, all eagerness to begin fishing. The *rods* had arrived! Pillar said it with such emphasis that Marcus asked what had not arrived?

"The stores, sir." A happy gloom here expressed itself on every feature of Pillar's face.

"The stores? Oh, that does n't matter."

"Very good, sir," said Pillar.

"What sort of stores?" asked Marcus, this res-

ignation, beautiful in its selflessness, on the part of Pillar looked bad.

"Oh, just ordinary stores, sir, tea and coffee and sugar, jam, marmalade, bacon, vermicelli, rice, oil, vinegar, sultanas, raisins, every kind of cereal, tapioca — macaroni — pickles."

Now many of these things Marcus hated, but he wanted them all the same. He did n't see why the railway company should have them. There was Mrs. Oven to keep happy, but it would take more than stores, it appeared, to make Mrs. Oven happy. The fire would n't burn.

"Dog, dog won't bite," quoted Diana, and Marcus told her not to be irrelevant.

The oven would n't heat itself, let alone water.

"Piggy won't get over the stile — don't worry," said Diana; "it's all too delicious. The station-master is still your brother, and Macpherson your keeper — "

Macpherson! Good idea! What about Mrs. Macpherson? Pillar would enquire. He enquired and came back to say she was a most respectable woman and had flour and tea and washing soda —

"If she would be so kind — " Marcus was beginning when Pillar respectfully broke in to say she would be kinder than that — moreover, she understood the stove. It could heat water and it could bake — the oven could. "It was just the

puir gals from London who didna understand the ways of it."

Pillar prided himself on his Scotch. He spoke it as well as many actors on the London stage speak it and with less effort.

When dinner-time came, into her own came Mrs. Oven. Whatever disappointment she had expressed, annoyance she had shown, she now proved that her cunning had not left her. There was a dinner and an excellent dinner. Women are wonderful creatures, and with the help of cows and hens there is no limit to what they can do if they set their minds to it.

Before Marcus and Diana went to bed that first night, when their fates as regarded beds and mattresses were still hid from them, Marcus called to Diana to come out. They stood in front of the lodge, Diana like a wraith in the moonlight — an exquisite visitant from another world.

"Listen!" said Marcus, and they heard the call of the cock grouse on the hillside, the weird cry of the plover, the soft rushing of the river, and it was all very, very good. And it would have been better still if that haunting question had not come back to torment the poor uncle. "Is she in love?" Did Elsie know of whom Diana was thinking as she stood there looking so horribly, so bound to be, in love?

"What are you thinking of?" he asked.

The moment was fraught with possibilities. At such a moment as this she might say what was in her heart, and if she did, and he found she was thinking of a suitable young man, he might say something of what he meant to do for her when she married. It was dangerous, he knew, to commit one's self, but still —

"Would you mind frightfully if I wore a kilt, because I think I must — darling, you *don't* mind — "

"Is that what you were thinking of?"

"No — darling — shall I tell you? I am a little shy about it. I — "

"Don't be shy."

"Well — you look most awfully — what shall I say? — handsome is not the word, is it? — alluring — no, not that — distractingly elusive — yes, that's it — at the same time you look as if you might be — are you — in love? Tell me — don't be shy — is it — Elsie?"

Marcus was far from being in love with Elsie, but she was always at his elbow as it were. Whenever Diana seemed particularly happy, he thought of Elsie and wondered what she would do to get Diana back? What attractions she would dare to offer? There was nothing he would n't do to show

Diana how infinitely to be preferred was Scotland above any other country, how much nicer than aunts were uncles. And Diana responded by walking like a gazelle and climbing like a goat; that was as far as Marcus could go in describing her particular grace and amazing activity. The first salmon he hooked he handed to Diana to play. She played and lost it, and he swore he would have done likewise — and the gillie agreed with him. But he had seen "wurrrse fishermen cert'nly," he would no be denying it. "Mister Maitland was a fair fisherman, but not so good a fisherman as he thought himself to be." When Marcus realized how Sandy ached for the feel of the rod, he let him feel it now and then, and he went up by leaps and bounds, as a fisherman and a God-fearing man in the eyes of Sandy.

Marcus was at his best when Diana was with him: he shot better and fished better under the spur of her generous admiration and encouragement; and of Elsie and her picnics and her croquet parties, and even her dances, he could think with a pity that was almost tender. He had plenty of opportunities in which to win Diana's confidence, and he imagined she gave it to him with a fine honesty that he found particularly gratifying. Mr. Watkins he dismissed with a gesture — it was impossible Diana could think seriously for one moment of a minor poet. Mr. Pease? Another gesture

and he was as nothing — he no longer existed. He was not for Diana. The young man in London troubled him. St. Jermyn was his name. He had nothing against him except that he had shown symptoms of possessing that power of attracting the whole attention and sympathy of a woman that Eustace Carston had shown. Had Diana the same power of devotion her mother had? The thought was disquieting. Diana would not say anything about the man except that he had danced better than any other — that was all. She vowed that Uncle Marcus alone held her heart: could hold her heart among the heather and the burns and the lochs: that he fitted in with the surroundings as no other man could. No man could be so interesting, no man so Scotch! If only he would wear a kilt! She would so love it!

Although Diana wanted no one but Uncle Marcus, a great many men found their way to Glenbossie. Men from up the river and down the river came with offerings of beats and butts. Men from the neighbouring moors brought offerings in the way of days — a day's driving later on; a day's stalking. Marcus had these things of his own, but he found he would have to share them and sharing them would mean sharing Diana.

"I wish," said Marcus one evening, "that I could see some of these men you talk about, so

that I might judge of them for myself. I should like to guide you in your choice."

"Do, darling," said Diana.

"But I can't without seeing them."

"Well, ask them here."

But that was more than he could do. There was nothing Diana could n't do when she tried. In the village (village? — Mrs. Oven could n't see where the village came in, but for all that it existed) there was an inn, a kirk, a general merchant, and that, with a few old people, and a few young men and women, and a few barelegged children, constituted Loch Bossie. The inn stood at the side of the road, and with the inn went fishing — bad fishing, perhaps, but fishing: and the people who had taken it this season could not come because their children had developed scarlet fever, which dispensation of Providence Mrs. MacFie — innkeeper — accepted as one to be borne with unwavering faith, and thankfulness that it was not worse. It meant for her the rent in her pocket and something more in the shape of compensation, and no one to feed or to fash about. So she was well content, though sorry for the poor things, of course. But it was a sorrow she could very well bear and she was bearing it very well, when into the inn walked an apparition. Mrs. MacFie did n't call Diana by that name, although Mr. Watkins might

have done so; and so might Mrs. MacFie if she had thought of it.

The apparition wore a tweed that went with her eyes, and the whole of Scotland went with her hair: and there was that in her voice that softened the heart of Mrs. MacFie, and in ten minutes Mrs. MacFie had promised the rooms, and the fishing at a moderate cost; and as many scones, dropped and griddled, as they could eat, to two young men who had been since the days they were born the solaces of their respective mothers.

According to Diana they neither drank nor did they eat to any appreciable extent. They liked whatever was set before them; and they were prepared to love Mrs. MacFie. That Diana implied rather than said: and she walked away, swinging as she walked as lightly as a silver birch dances blown by the breeze. Mrs. MacFie watched her, and that was how it struck her, and she went back into the house glad that the tenant at Glenbossie liked Scotland so well. It showed good sense and a good heart and the young leddy was no doubt in love with one of the young gentlemen, perhaps with both, and would be having them up so that she might choose between them; which was not exactly as matters stood, but near enough.

Diana wrote to Mr. Pease and to Mr. Watkins and they wrote back to say they would come. Mr.

Watkins had never fished, but was willing to try, and Mr. Pease had fished all his life, but had caught little. The prospect of good fishing filled him with delight. There was no sport in the world like it. Had Miss Diana ever considered how full the New Testament was of fishing? It was very encouraging — particularly to all bishops and curates.

Diana walked softly the day she got the letters. It was not only that Uncle Marcus should know him that she had asked Mr. Pease to come; not only that he should know Mr. Watkins that she had asked Mr. Watkins to come, but that they should enjoy themselves and that Mr. Pease should catch much fish.

She was of so delightful a nature that what she enjoyed she wanted others to enjoy. The thought of Mr. Pease riding up and down Bestways hills on his bicycle, ministering to the souls and bodies of old men and women, seemed, viewed from the moors of Scotland, where souls had such a chance, rather a sad lot. Uncle Marcus could well afford to give both Mr. Pease and Mr. Watkins a holiday. They would never question the smallness of the rent asked for the fishing, so Marcus could hide his light under a bushel and could easily escape the thanks he dreaded.

XIV

A man may know his own boots when he sees them, and yet not recognize his own joke.

DIANA did everything that was asked of her as tenant of Glenbossie and more. She loved the Minister's wife, her soft voice and gentle manner, and when she asked Diana to come to the Sale, to be held in the schools, Diana said, of course she would come, and on the appointed day she went down to the schools with her pockets full of Uncle Marcus's money, and on her way she passed old women whom she loved for the mutches they wore, and for the smiles within them. Every one had a soft word for her and a smile. When she got to the schools she did not stop to wonder why so many people were gathered together outside the door. They made way for her, and she went in and she bought all the shirts and all the socks: praised the making of them — and wondered at their strength and their softness — the softness of the socks and strength of the shirts. She bought other things, less useful, and perhaps not strictly beautiful, but she paid for them all right royally.

As she was the only person there she bought everything she could lay hands on, remembering

the soft voice and the gentle manner of the Minister's wife. One or two stall-holders, she remembered afterwards, did protest faintly: but she thought they were only afraid she was being too generous.

Having bought most things she rested from her labours, and walking to the window looked out, and saw sailing down upon the schoolhouse a party consisting of a very small, but very important-looking mother, and a charming-looking daughter and several other people, and she knew them to be the Scott party. Very important people were the Scotts — very important was their party. It was trimmed with white heather. The men wore kilts and the women the next best things. They all wore tartan stockings and some — some men, bonnets.

Diana's heart began to fail. The Minister was at the door to meet the Scott party and he welcomed Mrs. Scott and them all with great ceremony, and Mrs. Scott smiled upon him and said how delighted she was to open the bazaar.

The Minister consulted his watch in answer to her question, "Was she late?" and it was found she was not late.

"Not late, perhaps," thought Diana, "but everything was sold!"

After the opening of the Sale with prayer, Mrs.

Scott proclaimed it ready for buyers and she hoped that people would buy as many things as they could, and spend as much money as they — had — no, not that; but as much as they could spare! The crowd that had gathered outside now filled the hall.

The first shirt Mrs. Scott lost her heart to was sold, and the next. And the socks? Yes, sold!

Then Diana went round to all the stall-holders and assured them she had bought nothing — they might keep the money, but the things must be sold again. "Let me have afterwards what Mrs. Scott does n't want," she said. Mrs. Scott thanked Diana for coming, said she remembered her so well, at the — whose ball, was it? She told her Ralph St. Jermyn was coming to stay with them. "But I must do my duty. Have you found anything to buy? It is so kind of you. There will be lots for us all." And she went on her way buying all the things Diana had already bought. It was a very good way of selling from the stall-holders' point of view, and they had never made so much before at any sale in Loch Bossie, and in Scotland they make more by bazaars than in any other country in the world.

Diana made her escape so soon as she could, greatly to the disappointment of some of the Scott party, and she vowed to Uncle Marcus she would never go to another sale so long as she lived. He

asked her at what time she had gone, and she said at three o'clock — why?

He said he had only wondered because the Sale was to be opened at half-past three by Mrs. Scott.

"She must never know," said Diana.

"Never!" agreed Uncle Marcus, and he put out his hand for the change (there are very few men who don't ask for change) and he did not express that pleasure he ought to have experienced when he realized how greatly the Sale had benefitted by the officiousness of his niece.

When the parcel came from the bazaar for Diana there were within it neither the socks she had promised Pillar, nor the shirts longed for by John and Sandy, but only those things Mrs. Scott and others had not been requiring.

Two egg-cosies in tartan cloth.

One piano-key-cover in dark brown serge, worked in yellow silks.

One tea-cosy crocheted in string, lined with red sateen.

One shoe-bag in brown holland and bound with green braid.

One crazy patchwork cushion cover.

One bib.

One turkey twill bedspread —

"I should like to see the things you bought," said Uncle Marcus.

"You shall see them all this evening," said Diana softly.

"I hope you did n't buy any rubbish. I hate money wasted. Stockings and shirts are always useful."

Then Diana persuaded Pillar to lay out all Mr. Maitland's clothes on the bed, chairs, and tables in one of the spare bedrooms after dinner, and Pillar, because Miss Diana asked him to do it — did it.

"Particularly his boots, miss, you want, his shooting-clothes, and his shirts? Yes, miss."

"How many pairs of boots are there?" she asked.

Pillar pondered, and when he gave the number of pairs — "approximately, miss" — Diana said six of them would do.

And at half-past nine that night Diana told Uncle Marcus the things were all ready, laid out, in the spare room. She put out her hand inviting him to come, and he followed her upstairs and came into the room and saw spread upon the tables, bed, and chairs, things he must least have expected to see.

"Boots?" he asked, "*these* boots?" He took one up; looked at it, and put it down again. From that to another pair — from the boots he went to tweed coats, knickerbockers, trousers. "Was this as one would meet old friends?" thought Diana — "without one smile?"

From the blue shirt to the pink striped one, went Marcus; from the mauve silk one to the black-and-white striped one. From shirts to pyjamas; he had never thought he had so many, or such good ones. Back to the boots. He was perfectly serious and Diana wondered of what he was thinking? "You look very serious," she said.

"It is very serious," he answered. "You got a lot for your money, that's all I can say — the rest of the matter I must put into the hands of the police."

"Police?" asked Diana.

"My dear child, it's clearly a case of stealing. Some one has sold my clothes, and although the money may be given to the poor it won't do." And he went — bound, Diana was sure, for the Police Station.

She was so distressed that it was more than the respectfully tender heart of Pillar could stand, and he told her, begging her pardon, that Mr. Maitland had been "in the know," as it were. "You told him?" she asked, surprised and indignant.

"Well, miss, I could n't have done it without his leave."

But the joke was spoilt! Not entirely, said Pillar, there was no reason he should know she knew. There was generally the other side to a joke.

"You mean," said Diana, "that I must let Mr.

Maitland think that I am very much distressed — that I believe about the policeman?"

"Let things go their own way, miss. It's safest with jokes — certainly where single gentlemen — of a certain age — are concerned."

And she let things go their own way, and this is the way they naturally went. Uncle Marcus went downstairs looking very serious, and Diana followed him a few minutes later, looking very distressed.

He sat down at his table to write to the police.

"Don't!" she said, and laid a restraining hand on his shoulder.

"My dear child, I must. It cannot be left as it is."

"What do you suspect — *who* do you suspect?" she asked.

"I suspect that my things have been sold by some one to some one — else, and by some means or other they found their way to the bazaar, and by some strange chance you bought them."

Diana said, being the niece of her uncle, it was only natural that she should know good boots when she saw them.

This appeared to soften Uncle Marcus towards Diana, but in no other way was he to be moved.

"You don't suspect — Pillar?" she said softly. She was anxious to find out the way the joke was going — she thought it had got lost.

Marcus paused — it was a serious thing to say, even in fun — "I have reason to doubt him," he admitted.

Then up spake Diana: her eyes shining, her cheeks ablaze. She recounted — Marcus could n't have done it better himself — in fact she had got it all from him — the many and varied perfections of Pillar. His most excellent qualities — she had them all at her finger's ends. As she talked Marcus's heart warmed afresh towards the man he would as soon have suspected as himself of stealing — but Diana? Was she going to allow him to send for the policeman? Would she carry her joke to that extremity? He knew the note would go no further than Pillar: but she did not know that.

"Unless you can throw some light on the matter, this letter must go." And he wrote the letter, pausing between the words, blackening the down strokes, rounding the *e*'s; still Diana said nothing, and Uncle Marcus gave his letter to Pillar to send at once. Whereupon Diana burst into tears and left the room.

Outside the door there were no tears to be wiped away, but there was much to be done. She had to find a policeman; not so difficult that as it sounded. It only meant going so far as the next lodge and borrowing the first young man she could find; and off she went, having told a housemaid to lock her

bedroom door on the outside, and take the key away.

"Then if Uncle Marcus comes to comfort me," she thought, "he will find the door locked."

Uncle Marcus sat and waited. He made up his mind to wait five minutes. He could not let any woman cry for longer. They were fearfully long minutes. But they passed and he went upstairs. He knocked at the door. There was no answer, for by that time Diana was halfway to the next lodge.

"Diana?" Still no answer.

He waited. He heard her sob — was sure of it — confound the joke — "Diana!" No answer.

By this time Diana was at the next lodge; and was in the very act of coaching a young man — only too ready to be coached in anything by Diana, whom he had worshipped from afar the whole of one morning; from the other side of the river, to be exact — and he was perfectly willing to be a policeman if it made her happy.

"Can you talk Scotch?" she asked.

"Do you mean Gaelic?"

"Yes; if you can do that, it's better still, because Uncle Marcus 'has not' Gaelic." He could talk Gaelic, and he understood English. He laughed: in his present mood this seemed a good joke, and Diana laughed, too, which showed she was kind: then she asked, "How did Scotch policemen dress?"

The young man was sure — in blue. Diana decided he must wear a mackintosh. Uncle Marcus would be much too agitated to see anything: the mere sight of a policeman would be paralyzing to one of his temperament. The young man asked if Mr. Maitland would be likely to see the joke.

"Jokes are difficult things to deal with," admitted Diana. "There are better jokes than those we don't see: and there are none so good as those we see. It gives Uncle Marcus a way out."

Down the road walked Diana with the policeman to be, while Uncle Marcus pleaded, through a locked door, with a Diana not there. Then he grew stuffy and offended as he always did in time, being of so affectionate and sensitive a nature, and he went downstairs to the smoking-room, muttering to himself that if she did n't want to, he did n't, and so on. He took up his "Scotsman." How often had he found a refuge behind its generous pages, and he had only just taken up his position of offended dignity when the door opened and Pillar announced the arrival of the policeman.

"Idiot!" said Mr. Maitland, meaning Pillar, of course, and in walked the policeman.

"Just one moment," said Marcus, jumping up; "I must ask some one something before we go any further." And he went upstairs, two steps at a time, to Diana's room, and found her door still

locked. He tried it again and again, which took time: and while he was upstairs the real policeman happened to call for a subscription to a most deserving charity (the news of the generosity of the Glenbossie tenant had spread abroad like wild fire) and the pseudo-policeman retired in favour of the real thing, in the cause of charity.

When Mr. Maitland came down he did not notice the change — a policeman is a policeman to the law-abiding citizen, whether in a mackintosh or not.

"I am afraid there has been some mistake," he began, careful to seat himself back to the light: that much he had learned from much reading — in his youth — of detective stories. The policeman politely remarked that we were all liable — as human creatures — to make mistakes. Which axiom, pronounced in broad Scotch — of all accents the most comforting — sounded the kindest and most cheerful, as well as the most Christian, thing Marcus had heard for many a long day. Of course the policeman spoke generally, knowing nothing of any particular mistake. Mr. Maitland hastened to say he was sorry he had troubled him, and the policeman very naturally said the trouble was to be Mr. Maitland's. Marcus felt that acutely: there was no need to remind him of it.

"Now about the note — " began Marcus. And

the genial policeman said: One would do, although he would not be refusing more, if Mr. Maitland should be feeling so disposed — and he put out his capacious hand.

Then Mr. Maitland grasped the fact that the honest policeman was open to a bribe, and he pressed into his hand a larger number of notes than the honest policeman had ever hoped to hold — in the cause of charity. It was a good charity and deserving — whatever! And the policeman left the presence of Mr. Maitland a happy man; and the other policeman left the presence of Diana a most unhappy man — deeply and, he believed, hopelessly in love.

When Marcus, making a final attempt, knocked at Diana's door, he found it unlocked and a smothered voice told him to come in.

He went in. Diana was hidden under the bedclothes; she emerged at his urgent request. "Diana, my child, I am so sorry."

He looked at her: she was one of those happy women, he thought, who can cry without its leaving any disfiguring trace.

"It was only my joke writing to the policeman," he said, smiling as though asking pity for his simplicity.

"And it was only mine in sending for him."

"*You* sent for him?"

Diana nodded.

"But think of what Pillar must have thought!"

"Pillar knew — " said Diana; then, seeing Uncle Marcus's look of astonishment, explained. "Pillar would no more think of sending for a policeman without asking me than he would think of spreading out your clothes without asking you — he is wonderful! — Pillar!"

Uncle Marcus looked at Diana — if her hair had been done in one pigtail instead of two, and her eyes had not been so innocent and truthful in their appeal, he would have been very, very angry. As it was he looked so kind that she ventured: "Mine was n't a real — policeman."

"Not a real policeman? Then who was he?"

"Just a man staying at the Lodge up the river."

"And I gave him ten pounds!"

"No, darling; that was to the real policeman who happened to come for a subscription. We changed policemen while you were upstairs asking my advice. You were upstairs with me while I was downstairs with two policemen: it all sounds rather muddling, but it's really quite simple."

"What an ass he must have thought me!" said Marcus, thinking of the real policeman.

"Oh, no; he just thought you were the English tenant of Glenbossie, that's all."

Marcus got up and, walking about the room,

came to a standstill before a pile of things on the top of a chest of drawers. "What are these abominations?" he asked.

"The things I bought at the bazaar," said Diana, disappearing under the bedclothes.

When Mrs. Scott met Marcus she said: "It was so good of him to subscribe so largely to their cottage hospital." And Marcus said: "Not at all!"

XV

Before ever men were Christians they were fishermen. Let men now be first Christians, then fishermen, so shall they not forget the gillie who stands and waits.

ONE evening in August there went out from Euston, bound for Scotland, two men, each with his heart full of Diana. There went also yet another and his heart, too, was full of Diana. Her address he had learnt was Glenbossie, and to Glenbossie he was going, although he had no invitation. Nevertheless he did not despair. God is ever on the side of youth, and — if youth had not been asked to the Lodge he was going to the station, and where a Loch Bossie station is there is bound to be a Glenbossie Lodge. Wandering along the platform at Euston, seeing again all the things — familiar things — of which abroad he had dreamed every August and onwards — men and dogs, gun cases and fishing-rod cases — he came upon a prodigiously long fishing-rod case. It must belong, he thought, to a renowned fisherman, or to one who had fished little. Guarding the rod case, almost jealously, he saw what he guessed to be a parson, with a light in his eyes, not of this world.

No one knew better than Miles Hastings what starting for Scotland meant, but he had learnt to keep his face in order, whatever liberties his heart might take. Approaching the owner of the long rod case he read the label attached — "Watkins, Loch Bossie."

Now Miles Hastings was a lucky young man, but this was more than even he could have expected. Here was one who could tell him all he wanted to know, so he set about to make friends with Watkins, of Loch Bossie; but he found it was with one Pease he made friends, who but guarded the treasure of Watkins.

Miles had a genius for making friends, and a charming frankness that endeared him at sight to old ladies, old men, men and women generally, and children in particular. He was devoted to all animals especially if they were young, and as to puppies, he was as putty in their paws. There was nothing he would not give a puppy if "asked for it" properly. In winter-time he would rescue little birds in the snow: take them home and revive them. He would go out of his way to help anything that could not help itself. In addition to this he was good to look at, a wholesome, fine young Englishman, and in all this there lay danger, Sir Eustace thought, danger to Diana: and against it he would have protected her. Also he wanted to

protect himself against the possibility of having to say No, if Hastings should ask him for Diana, which if he met her he was bound to do. Sir Eustace would have liked to be able to say, "My dear boy, there is no one in the world to whom I would rather give her!" "And why not say it?" thought Sibyl Carston, who was one of those who held strongly the belief that things must turn out all right in the end, and so strong was her faith in the good that must come to those who look for it that it generally did come. It had come to her, why not to Diana? Life had been very good to Miles Hastings: the world had treated him very kindly, surely it would go on being kind. His was a nature that only expected what it gave in overflowing measure itself — just kindness — surely there should be no difficulty about that.

So he made friends with Pease, thinking to himself: "Here is a nice young thing, devoted to his mother" — he looked like that — "who is going off to fish, to catch bigger fish than he has ever caught, bigger fish than the world has ever seen, and better fish"; he hoped he might catch them. But, by the way, where was Pease going, *exactly?* Deep guile this, for Hastings knew, but Pease knew not that Hastings knew. So he explained — with an indifference assumed — that he was going to the inn at Loch Bossie where the fishing was

excellent — quite excellent! Yes, it was near Glenbossie Lodge — yes, quite near!

Here Pease pulled at his pipe, giving pause to think.

No, Glenbossie Lodge was not to let. Pease knew that — had very good reasons for knowing it. It was strange he should have been asked because he was curiously cognizant of the state of affairs.

"How much?" asked Captain Hastings.

"I happen to know all about it."

"Oh, yes, thanks, I am only just back from abroad; one gets a little rusty — I remember the word, of course. Please go on."

"I am able to give you the information, because I happen to know the man who has taken it."

Captain Hastings nodded. That was good evidence, except that sometimes lodges at the last moment were sub-let. Was it possible — ?

"It is a sub-let as it is," said Pease, interrupting him.

"And who has taken it?"

"A Mr. Maitland."

"A good chap?"

"Oh, I believe so, but I am — as it were — on the other side."

Captain Hastings looked puzzled and Mr. Pease hastened to explain.

"You see there is a little family friction on the

subject of the guardianship of the children, during the absence of their parents abroad, and I am rather on the side of the aunt."

Captain Hastings thought he looked as though he would be, but did not say so. "You are going to the Lodge, I suppose?" He knocked the ash off the end of his cigar.

No, Mr. Pease was not going there. The fact of the matter was Watkins also wanted a holiday — and they were both going to the inn so — so as to be near Glenbossie Lodge.

"And you?" asked Mr. Pease, feeling it was now his turn to ask questions. Miles Hastings did not say he was going to the Lodge, but he was.

"I shall hope to get into the inn," he said modestly; "from what you say it must be a most excellent place."

In the corner of a third-class compartment sat Watkins, writing a poem to Diana. He had been fired with the rhyming possibilities of "glossy" and "Bossie," and it may be presumed that a very minor poet is as eager to capture a rhyme as a swallow is to catch a fly.

Pease intimated to Hastings that he personally was enjoying the journey immensely — so far; hinted that it was almost a pity they should have to part; he supposed Captain Hastings had booked a sleeper, otherwise they might have talked the

greater part of the night. Almost apologetically Hastings confessed that he had booked a sleeper. He was afraid he was a slave to comfort — it was a terrible thing to confess to; but Pease said he quite understood — he was only sorry for his own sake — being a light sleeper he was quite ready to talk.

Hastings gave him, at parting for the night, the story of the old lady, the parson, and the sleeping-berth, and felt it no poor thing to give. And when he saw Pease next morning Pease was still smiling. Whether it was the beginning of a new smile, or the lasting impression of the one he had worn the night before, when they had parted, Hastings could not say. It was enough that a man could smile after sitting up all night; it spoke well for England and her sons. Miles smiled, too, happy in thinking that perhaps on this very ground Diana, not long ago, had stood. He did not know the same thought filled the mind of Pease. Watkins had chased elusive quantities during a long night. He had neither had good sleep nor had he been able to make bad poetry — so he was not happy and he had never cared less for Pease. To the stranger, he had taken a great dislike. What had such a man to do with men like himself and Pease? Hard-working, sensible men!

Hastings went with the two other men to the

inn, and there he laid siege to the heart of Mrs. MacFie, and the quality of his smile was such that her Scottish reserve melted beneath its warmth, like butter beneath the rays of the sun, and she promised to give him a bedroom: and if he would be requiring it, a sitting-room; but Hastings would not be requiring a sitting-room: he meant to sit elsewhere — and for the matter of that to sleep elsewhere — after the first night; but he did not say that.

The first day, what there was left of it, he spent quietly bearing all things with patience. He watched Pease tangling and disentangling fishing-tackle: watched Watkins reading a book on the *Salmo salar*. For Pease he evinced a great liking and for Watkins a profound pity, for he judged there was to be no untruth to which Watkins would not descend for the sake of a rhyme: whereas Pease was honesty itself, which combined with an almost childlike simplicity made him likable enough. That night Miles Hastings slept. The following morning he rose refreshed, if not quite a giant — and after all why not a giant, since there are more kinds of giants than one, if we are to believe the old story of the man who applied to the Manager of a Travelling Show for the advertised vacancy of giant? "But you're not even a big man," protested the manager; whereupon the man, drawing himself

up, said proudly: "No, I am the smallest giant in the world!"

Miles might claim to be more than that. Pease respected him immensely for his tweeds and his tie: and Watkins envied him his inches.

After breakfast Miles started off for Glenbossie Lodge and nothing of beauty escaped him as he went. The clearness of the running river — too clear for a fisherman — was for him at the moment beautiful. The minutest flower that grew in the cranny of a rock filled him, on this wonderful morning, with delight; because everything in nature sang of Diana. All beauty was but a tribute to hers. He laughed as the sheep scuttled out of his path. The scent of the bog-myrtle rose like incense on the air: the sandy road with its heather-topped ruts was good going: the wide stretches of moor on either side of him invited him to climb the hills to which they gently led: the rocks scattered here and there in the heather challenged him to guess how they had come there. Great boulders they were that no man could move, certainly not the smallest giant in the world.

The curlew called to him: the gulls plainly enough told him to go away — the sky was theirs — not his: the sea and all that therein was — theirs, not his. A little child padded past him, too shy to answer his greeting; but not too shy to

smile hers. The burns gurgling down from the hillside laughed at him — chuckled over jokes of their own, which jokes were hidden either deep down in "pots," or by the heather that touched hands over the laughing waters.

Hastings knew what good jokes little trout can be, and if he had been younger they might have kept him, — even from Diana, — but now nothing could do that: everything bade him hurry, the golden-rod at the side of the road waved to him: the blue and pink scabious nodded: everything sympathized with him.

An old woman making hay, in a patch of a field, at the side of the road, came down to the low stone wall and greeted him in her soft native tongue; which greeting conveyed to him a wish for good luck in his wooing. She understood! Her smiling, sunken eyes held memories. It must have been years ago that she was wooed, yet she had not forgotten! Who could forget, if it had been among these hills, beside these burns, under this sky that he had loved? O Scotland! No wonder Shan't addressed her letters to Uncle Marcus "Glenbossie, darlin' Scotland."

Arrived at the Lodge, Miles went up the pebbly path that led to the door, rang the bell — and waited.

Pillar came to the wide-open door. "Good-morning," said Captain Hastings.

"Good-morning, sir," said Pillar.

"I have an order — " Then he repented him of his wickedness and said, "Would you allow me to see over the house?"

"It is let, sir."

"Let? What scoundrels they are — agents — letting me come all this way — for how long is it let?"

"For two months, sir."

"Ah, yes, of course, but I am in negotiations for taking it on a long lease — ninety-nine years sort of thing."

Pillar looked at him. Ninety-nine years! He did n't believe there were such things in Scotch leases — but perhaps it was hardly worth discussing that — the quality of the visitor was such that Pillar judged him to be a law unto himself.

"Would — whoever the house is let to — allow me, d' you think, to see over it? I must do it now or never — I 've come a long way from — " And he mentioned that far-off island, the sound of whose name was always in Diana's heart if not forever on her lips. She was passing through the hall, heard the name, and went out — and found herself face to face with the young man who for months had prayed for her every night. That, of course, she did not know. But she knew he must know her father and mother.

"I was asking if you would be so kind as to

allow me to see the Lodge." She was far more adorable than he had imagined and that he had not deemed possible.

"Of course," she answered; "do come in"— and he went in, following his dream of dreams come true.

"This is the hall," she said; "it's small, but it's quite big enough for wet mackintoshes — and — "

"I like it," said Hastings, looking at her.

"So do I — this is the dining-room." She opened a door and motioned him to go in. He went in and said it was delicious — still looking at her.

"We should n't think it so delicious in England, I suppose. I 've never sat on horsehair in England."

"Rather slippery, is n't it?"

"This is what we call the living-room —" opening another door; "your wife would perhaps call it the drawing-room — you *are* married?"

"No — but why should you say my wife would call it that?"

"Why should n't she?"

"Because — why should n't she call it what you do?"

"Don't get stuffy about it — I did n't mean to say anything against your wife."

"But you did — and it's a thing no man should stand — you said she would do what you would n't do."

"And why should n't she?"

"Because I would n't allow it — "

At that Diana laughed so much that Uncle Marcus came to see what she was laughing at. Had she had a letter from Elsie? — forgetting this was not post-time — and he saw to his great amazement a long-legged, very nice-looking young man (the right sort of young man) sitting quite close to Diana and laughing just as much as Diana was laughing and apparently with as little reason.

"My dear Diana — " he said.

"Oh, here's some one to see the house and we're fighting about his wife."

"*Wife?*" A smile broke upon the lips of Marcus — thank goodness, this man was married.

"And he has n't got one," said Diana.

"Not got one?"

"Not yet," said Hastings; "the fact of the matter is — I am just back from abroad. Perhaps I should tell you at once that I am Miles Hastings, one of Sir Eustace Carston's A.D.C.'s — and — "

Of course Marcus vowed it was the most extraordinary thing that had ever happened! Of course, he must stay with them. His luggage should be sent for. Marcus pulled the bell-rope and it came down. Diana said it always did, and she went to call Pillar.

"It's too amazing you should have come by chance," said Marcus.

Hastings did not see why he should say he had gone to Mr. Maitland's house in London, and asked his address, because it was such an easy thing to guess — Mr. Maitland should have guessed it. Lady Carston naturally had not known the Scotch address, but she had given him the London one. Neither did he feel bound to say that Sir Eustace had shown no anxiety to give him even the London one. He had wondered at it; now he was beginning to understand, for no father possessed of a daughter like Diana would wish to encourage any man.

Miles Hastings did not suppose, of course, for one moment, that Sir Eustace had thought him rather more dangerous than most young men, and was seeking to protect Diana against his fascination. Nor could he have dared to imagine that Lady Carston would have let the child take her chance, believing it might be a happy chance. He was happy enough as it was.

The following day he was happier still. He and Diana were fishing on the loch. Away in the distance, a speck on the face of the waters, were Watkins and Pease in their boat, fishing too.

To be quite accurate, in Diana's boat, John, gillie, was fishing, while Donald, gillie, kept the boat drifting: and it must drift until Miles Hastings, in the bow, had told Diana, likewise in the

bow, all there was to tell of that far-off island, from which he had come — to see her.

He had said everything any girl would wish to hear said of her father. He had said nearly all he had to say about her mother. He was now deep in tropical undergrowth and vegetation. It was wonderful the number of plants he remembered in their infinite variety — tree ferns — trees, ferns, and flowers. Diana listened — she had never before found ferns interesting.

Marcus waved from his boat, but no one saw him. So he went home and sent Elsie two brace of grouse. It was a message he wanted to send more than the grouse and he dipped his pen in vinegar and wrote, "Diana is very happy surrounded with admirers."

Elsie ate the grouse, sharing them with others, dipped her pen in gall, and wrote back: "Of course she is. She always is, but this surely is *the* one — what do you think?"

What did Marcus think? A thousand things, miserable things — jealous things, unreasoning things, and, above all, he thought: "How did she know? Had Diana confided in her and not in him?"

He took Elsie's letter out on to the river's side to read again, to make certain of what lay behind her words.

While he was reading it he gave Sandy the

rod, and Sandy was grateful to the man who had written a letter (surely a woman it must have been) that took three distinct readings to its proper digestion. If a man were a true Christian — and all fishermen should be that, for the earliest of all Christians were fishermen before anything else — he would give the rod oftener to the gillie who stands beside him, knowing himself to be by far the better fisherman of the two. For hours he stands there with that certain knowledge biting into his heart.

If Marcus had told Sandy all that lay in his heart, Sandy would have been profoundly interested, no doubt, because he had had cause, in his time, to think of women as interfering creatures — and of small use in a world of God-fearing men. There were exceptions, he would have allowed, and he would have instanced the one now driving along the road behind them.

"Yon's Mrs. Scott," he said to Marcus.

"Where?" And Marcus's eyes, following the direction of Sandy's finger, saw a lady driving two ponies in a low phaeton. She pulled up the ponies and, getting out of the carriage, came over the heather towards Marcus. Marcus again handed the rod to Sandy and went to meet Mrs. Scott: Sandy would not have minded if Mr. Maitland had gone to Heaven — just for a wee bittie, while

he, Sandy, fished the pool as it should be fished — on earth.

Mrs. Scott was a gentle, mild, little woman and she looked much happier in the heather she loved than she had looked in the ballroom, in London, she had not loved. And the tweed hat, pulled down over her eyes, was infinitely more becoming to her than the tiara had been.

"Any luck?" she asked.

"None. Sandy thinks I'm a poor fisherman."

She smiled: Sandy possibly was right, but that should n't count against Mr. Maitland as a man.

It was then Mrs. Scott said how kind Marcus had been in subscribing so generously to the cottage hospital, and Marcus said: "Not at all."

"I was so glad," went on Mrs. Scott, "to see your niece at the Sale — it was so good of her to come. I remember her so well at the dance that night — you remember?"

Marcus remembered more than he wanted her to remember. Did she remember that he had told her she was beautiful? It was a thing, he feared, no plain woman would be likely to forget.

Mrs. Scott sat down, arranged the heather round her, dug the heels of her square-toed brogues into its roots, and began:

"Now tell me about her! That night she seemed imprisoned sunshine — is she in love?"

Marcus looked at her honest little brogues; then at her clear eyes, but even they could not reassure him. "D' you know her aunt, on the other side?" This to make sure.

Mrs. Scott said she did not. "On the other side? Which side are you? Her mother's, of course, how stupid I am! Is the aunt very charming?"

Marcus said he hardly knew her, and felt this restraint on his part to be magnanimous.

Mrs. Scott smiled. "It's so nice not to have to know relations on the other side, is n't it? Sometimes they expect to be kissed — oh, I mean, women expect women relations on the other side — "

Marcus hastened to say he quite understood.

Mrs. Scott went on. "I was so sorry to miss your niece when I called. You can imagine how busy one is when one first comes back here. There are all the dear old people to see. I admired your niece so much that night — I was homesick for the breeze on the moor — for the views of hills in the distance — for — well, just for this dear country of mine and your niece seemed to open the door to its soft west wind."

Marcus was very happy.

"I really want to tell you Ralph St. Jermyn arrives to-morrow. You know why I expect you to be interested? I have not forgotten how inter-

ested he seemed that night. Does she care, do you think?"

"I cannot tell whether my niece cares for any one or not — there are several."

"Of course there must be, but Ralph is so — "

"Yes, I know, but she must do as she wishes — "

"Of course — I only thought — perhaps, hoped — I was very sleepy that night. I forget much of what happened."

Marcus was relieved to hear it.

"You were very kind to me, I remember. I am so insignificant in a ballroom, I generally go to sleep: but people are very kind; some one always tells me when it's time to wake up — but here I count and I like it. I am thankful to be noticed by any one in London, but here people are bound to notice me," — and the little woman laughed. "I stand out. The biggest gillie runs to do my bidding, and I love them all — gillies, women, children; lairds too — all of them; and my one hope is that my Sheila may meet some good man soon and marry him at once, so that I may never have to go to London again. Will you tell your niece how kind she was the other day at the bazaar? But she ran away too soon. I am afraid these things bore young people, although my party were very long-suffering — I am a fearful ogre, I fear."

Marcus turned and looked at her: a little speck

of kind humanity she seemed in a vast sea of heather. At her feet, heather; behind her, heather; before her, the rushing river; above her, the blue sky; encircling her on all sides, hills, hills, hills.

"It's good to be alive — it's a good world," she said, but Marcus was not so sure that it was. His days were spent without Diana, and his evenings with Pease and Watkins; while Hastings talked to Diana about her father. It was quite impossible, he knew, that there should be so much to say about any one man, and now to add to it all another man was coming who would also talk to Diana — of many things.

XVI

When a man lights a fire for a poor little bird,
It shows that those beautiful words he has heard,
That never a sparrow can fall to the ground
But a wound in the heart of his Maker be found.

WHEN Ralph St. Jermyn had arrived at the Scotts' there were assembled, within reasonable distance, what Aunt Elsie would have called all Diana's admirers, and Marcus, having expressed a wish to see them all together, so that he might judge of them, Diana set about to make plans so that he might have the opportunity he sought.

Her mind being full of islands, having heard much of one from Miles Hastings, she bethought herself of a bird-island that lay out to sea at some distance from the end of the Loch, and on that island she proposed Uncle Marcus and the other men should spend some time together. Marcus was perfectly willing. He was interested in sea-birds and loved the sea; moreover, he was always anxious to do anything Diana asked him to do, in the hope, perhaps, that Aunt Elsie would have proved in like circumstances less amenable. There was always that incentive to an extreme amiability.

Uncle Marcus said he would ask St. Jermyn to join them and stay the night; but Diana must understand it was late in the season for young birds to be hatched. It was very unlikely there would be any. Diana did n't mind that — a bird was a bird, no matter its age. She had a good deal to say to Miles Hastings on the subject of islands. She dwelt on them particularly at those times when he wanted to talk of other things — emphasizing rather persistently, he thought, the fact that whereas one man on an island was as helpless as a new-born babe, another was useful, resourceful, and undefeated. He said he understood: Uncle Marcus would be rather useless, St. Jermyn more so. "But you," said Diana, "would make soup out of birds' nests?"

He questioned it, but she persisted and went so far as to predict that he would serve it up in the half of a cocoanut shell, to which he readily agreed, such things being usually found on the islands of Scotland.

"Wait and see," she said.

He was waiting as it was, and growing daily more and more hopeless; just as surely as Diana was growing more and more delightful, and, of course, more and more beautiful. Any girl may do that, is bound to do it, in the eyes at least of the man who loves her. With Mr. Maitland, Hastings

felt he made no progress. He was polite, as a host is almost in duty bound to be, but he never talked about Diana as Hastings would have liked him to talk: never left them alone together, as Hastings would have liked to be left. He very often, on the contrary, prevented them being alone and Diana unfortunately did not seem to notice it. Hastings wondered in what way he might propitiate his host. He might save him from drowning, but it was hardly likely Mr. Maitland would place himself in that particular danger, thereby affording Hastings the opportunity he so earnestly sought. He might save Diana from drowning, but even to benefit himself he would not let her risk that peril by water.

The island, on which Diana proposed Uncle Marcus and the young men should be stranded for a while, rose straight from the sea: a barren rock. It would take three quarters of an hour to get there in the motor launch, and given a fine day it should prove a delightful expedition — "For those who like it," said Watkins mournfully.

Diana undertook to make all the arrangements. She and John discussed the matter at length, and John would have been seen — if any one had looked — to shake his head every now and then during the discussion, and to raise a protesting hand; but protest as he would, Diana triumphed

and her word was law — just as her will was his pleasure, which John was most careful to say when it was most evident her will was *not* his pleasure.

Uncle Marcus had suggested taking lunch with them, but Diana objected. She said they would get frightfully tired of the island, and as soon as they had seen what birds there might be just out of the shell, and what birds there might be not quite out of the shell, they would long to go home. Again Diana had her way.

They landed on the island: Diana climbing up ahead of them all and calling first to one, then to another to come and look here — and there. She pointed out evidence of original sin as presented by the sight of a little bird still attached to its shell, who was ready to fight for the rocky inheritance that was his by at least the right of priority. The men were interested. Everything in the nature of uncultivated land, be it rock or otherwise, suggested interesting problems to St. Jermyn, and at his fingers' ends he had statistics as to how many herrings were eaten per day per gull. That opened up the "Fisheries" question, an important one.

Marcus was perfectly ready to discuss any question with St. Jermyn; but he wanted first of all to take a photograph of a particular gull, who at all events up to this moment had not deprived

the poor man of a single herring. "Just wait," he said, "one moment!"

Marcus found St. Jermyn very interesting: and exactly the kind of man he would like Diana to marry if she must marry, but he did not see the necessity. Hastings, too, was, of course, very attractive, for even to Marcus a certain length of limb and an amazing amount of virility in a young man were attractive. As to many middle-aged men youth strongly appealed to him, and it was only because of Diana that he made the smallest attempt to withstand Hastings. Having only just discovered her, as it were, he did not see why he should give her up to the first man who happened to fall in love with her.

When all the men were deeply engaged with the birds on the island, Diana took the opportunity to slip away, back to the landing-place where John awaited her orders. "Now, John," she said; and John drew from his capacious pockets various things, among them a flask, a bottle, and a parcel. "Just inside the cave, John, there!" Diana pointed to the cave, and John climbed up the rock and put the things inside the cave. Diana followed him, and at the mouth of the cave she built a cairn of stones, and under the top stone she placed a slip of paper; then telling John to be quick she left the place as quickly as she had come and sliding down

the rock called to him to slide softly: but John was heavier than Diana and slid less gracefully, and little stones came rattling down with him.

"They'll no be hearin' them," said John.

Diana dropped into the boat where Tooke was biding his time, and hers. She told him to slip off quietly, and he assured her that what noise the boat would make would be drowned by the sound of the wind which was rising. John screwed up his eyes, looked out to sea, and predicted a "storrrm." Diana was afraid they might not escape unseen, and she looked anxiously to the quickly receding island; but John said the gentlemen would be so busy in taking the little birds that they would not be looking.

"Not taking them, John; that would be horribly cruel!"

"Just their photograph-ees, miss," said John.

He went on to say he had been one day fishing on the loch with a gentleman, and as they had passed an island on the loch they had seen three wee birds just out of the shell, and when they came back five hours later and passed the island the wee birds had swum out to meet them. "And, indeed, they did and the gentleman took them."

"Not the birds, John," protested Diana again for the sake of his reassurance, "just their photograph-ees," and Diana thought of Uncle Marcus,

who was also just taking photograph-ees of little birds, and her eyes danced and she saw nothing of the storm that was coming.

She got home and ate a most excellent luncheon cooked in Mrs. Oven's best manner, and having drunk her coffee sat down to write a letter, and the letter she wrote was this:

DEAREST AUNT ELSIE, — I am all alone. It's really rather nice. I think it's a little tiring being so much with men. They are so exacting, don't you think so? However, to-day they have left me alone and I don't feel deserted or in the least unhappy, but I should love to see you, if only for a minute. I don't know why, but I feel I should like to have some one to laugh with. You are such a splendid laugher. Uncle Marcus has gone on a kind of a scientific expedition. He wants very much to take what John calls photograph-ees of sea-birds on their nests, and he has taken all the men with him.

I suppose there is no better way of judging of a man's character than to be stranded with him on a desert island. I can imagine that, if by any chance, Uncle Marcus and party were stranded there, Mr. Watkins would read his poetry to him. Would n't the Marky man love it? Mr. Pease? What would he do? Tell him stories of his life as a

child? — his lonely childhood? Mr. St. Jermyn, I imagine, would leave him severely alone; would go to the farthest part of the island and would gently curse in an unparliamentary manner. What do you think, my aunt? And Captain Hastings, what would he do? I think and believe he would cook a delicious dinner and feed Uncle Marcus, give him soup in cocoanut shells and seaweed fritters, and fried eggs—gulls' eggs. We shall see—should see, I mean.

Uncle Marcus is frightfully pleased with life. Of course, the shooting is not what he expected and the river is low, but he is very much softened by his stay in the Highlands, and yesterday he hoped you were quite well: and he wondered if you minded living in a relaxing part of the world; which, by the way, you don't do. But I did n't say so because it seems to make him more of a happy Christian to think you do. Pillar is delightful here. He shot a grey-hen the other day, a very bad sin, and when he was reprimanded, he expressed contrition, but added: "It was very encouraging, sir." I suppose it is when you don't shoot much. Uncle Marcus forgets that a man, though poor and lowly, may be a sportsman. I want him to give the gillies a day on the moor; and I want Uncle Marcus and all my young men to act as gillies. The boat will be going to fetch

Uncle Marcus in a minute, so I must stop. I hope you are n't very lonely. I wish you were here!

Your loving

DIANA

Then she walked to the window and looked out. It was raining, not heavily; but a fine, driving mist blotted out the landscape. The island would be rather a horrible place now — rather horrible! She became grave; she no longer wanted Aunt Elsie because she was a splendid laugher, but rather because she was one to quiet fears, to make things look brighter than they really were. Could any aunt in the world do that now? No glimmer of light pierced the grey pall that hung over the Lodge of Glenbossie.

Diana went to the door and called John, and out of the mist stepped John, and Sandy with him. Beads of moisture stood all over their rough tweed coats and they looked as serious as they looked moist. They said: "What aboot the gentlemen, now?" and Diana asked, "What about them?"

And Sandy looked to John and John shook his head and was thinking the sea would be too rough: there would be no fetching them now. And Sandy nodded. John was right there.

"Not to-day?" asked Diana.

John doubted it: Sandy doubted it. Diana began to doubt it.

The moor was no longer visible. The birch wood was blotted out.

"Tooke must try, Sandy — John! He must! Make him!"

"Aye," said the two men, and like Shetland ponies they turned their backs to the storm.

"What did we leave on the island? Enough whiskey for them all?"

John shook his head.

"Not enough?" asked Diana incredulously. "There was a whole flask."

"And there are five gentlemen to it," said John, and he shook his head.

"But five men could n't drink a flask of whiskey in one day, it 's such disgusting stuff!" said Diana.

And John looked to Sandy and Sandy to John. It took a good joke to make Sandy laugh — he laughed the noo!

"We left a lobster — and a tin of sardines, did n't we, John?" said Diana anxiously.

John would not be saying that much whatever.

"And a match?"

"A match, yes." John admitted that.

"What else?"

He said they had thought that enough, for the matter of an hour or two.

"Some tobacco, John?"

"Yes, some tobacco."

One match, some tobacco, a tin of sardines, a lobster, a flask of whiskey, a bottle of water, and two empty cocoanut shells and — five men.

Marcus Maitland peering into his camera hoped he had n't taken two photographs on one film, and Hastings was quite certain he had not. Why that certain assurance should have been his was simply evidence that it had been his duty in life to assure his elders and betters that whatever their excellencies had done, they had done well and that nothing they did could be wrong. "Take another," he suggested, "to make sure." And Marcus took another. As he wound up the film he wondered where his niece was. Hastings, of course, was wondering, too, and hoping: "Not on the other side of the island with St. Jermyn." "I don't know, sir," he said; "shall I go and find her?"

At the same moment Mr. Watkins came along. He wanted, he said, to show Miss Carston something really most interesting he had found. Every one had something most interesting to show Miss Carston, but she was not to be found. Marcus suggested they should all look for her, she could n't be far off. The island was small — but she herself was not to be found, though all the men sought her.

Uncle Marcus thought she must be in the boat and went to see, but he could find no boat. It was, therefore, quite evident she had gone fishing. They must wait till she came back; she must be back soon. They waited.

A sea-bird island is not a very pleasant place to be on for any length of time: moreover, there was a storm getting up.

"Let us call for help!" said Pease. "Let us shout!"

Watkins yodled. Ever since he had come north he had been awaiting his chance to do it. He did it again and again.

"Don't do that," said Marcus; "I can't hear."

Watkins, piqued, said there was nothing to hear.

"Listen!" entreated Marcus.

They listened. There was the screaming of birds disturbed: the chippering of chicks alarmed; but no sound of Diana's voice, or anything like it.

"It looks stormy," said Marcus, turning up the collar of his coat.

"A bit choppy," admitted Hastings.

"The mist rolls up — List to the sound of guns — buns — duns — puns — runs — " said Watkins; then he added wistfully, "It's curious that there is no rhyme to month."

"Who wants one?" asked Pease.

"It's not a question of wanting one, my dear

Pease; there is not one to be had. If I stay here a month I cannot say so in a poem without great difficulty, and probably — "

"There's bunth, of course," said Hastings, "but perhaps he does n't count." He lit a cigarette.

"Never heard of such a word."

"No? He — or it if you prefer it — is a jolly little beast, usually to be found in the tropics under a leaf, and is something between a marmoset and a beetle." Hastings threw away the match with which he had lighted his cigarette and Marcus picked it up; he hated matches thrown about.

"A what?" asked Watkins, his pocket-book ready and pencil poised.

"It's no time for joking, Hastings," said Marcus. "A storm in this part of the world can get up in a moment: we're in for one now, unless I'm very much mistaken and we may be here for hours. What can have happened?"

"We are stranded on a desert island, that's quite clear," said Hastings, and he remembered Diana's words. What had she said about desert islands? She had rather harped on the subject. Was she playing a practical joke? It looked like it. If she had planned a ridiculous game he would play it with her. If she had meant to be funny he would laugh with her. He would enter into the spirit of any joke she chose to perpetrate — be it good, bad,

or indifferent; and after all an island is an island, and a man is a boy, and what man is there, who is as much a boy as he ought to be, who can be on an island and not light a fire? or be in a wood and not look for birds' nests? Being very much of a man he was very much of a boy. Diana had spoken in fun of desert islands. Did she realize how deeply implanted in the heart of every real man is the longing for the primordial life? Not for long, perhaps, but to experience it, for once? Hastings had dreamed all his life of a desert island. He had cooked, he had built, he had slept, on a desert island. He had lain awake under the stars above it, slept, lulled by the wind that rocked it. He had risen with the sun that rose behind it, and had bathed in the noonday heat that scorched it. Did Diana know the lure of those dreams? He set out to explore and at the mouth of the cave he came upon the cairn of her building. He took the paper from under the top stone and he read of the historical one match, with which she dared him to light a fire! It required, she said, the very particular skill of the experienced explorer to light a fire with the last match. " I am sure you can do it," she wrote. Further she said she knew exactly how a desert island should be furnished — there should, by rights, of course, be a chest of drawers in the cave. She knew how it should be stocked: with

what cunning the stores should be hidden; they should stand upon a rock in full view — but she realized how little time there was to spare, how soon Uncle Marcus would tire of a desert island; so she had placed all he should need in a box, and in that box he would find two halves of a cocoanut shell, in which to make soup, and other things, such as whiskey, that should help to keep Uncle Marcus warm and happy for a little while — and sardines that should sustain him. Hastings wished Diana had thought of a funnier joke, but he had vowed he would be amused. He would light the fire; that at least would be good fun, and he would stick faithfully to the one match. He would tell her he had made soup and boiled eggs. He would get Uncle Marcus to swear he had swallowed them; he — Miles — should not be the loser in the end: the joke should be his . . . until such time as it should find its way home again to her!

He went out of the cave to gather driftwood. The storm had risen, he was caught by the scudding rain and whipped by the wind. He wished she would come. In a moment the rain was running down his neck and oozing over the tops of his shoes. The joke was beginning to pall, but he said to himself, and truly, that if it had been any one else's it would have palled long before. He was going back to the cave when he saw at his feet a

little bird that looked about to die. "Poor little beggar!" he said. "It's a poor joke, isn't it?" And lifting it up he examined it, promising to do what he could to save its funny little life. "You would, would you?" he asked, as the little bird pecked at his finger. "Wait a bit, my little friend, until you are sitting by a warm fire with a speck of whiskey inside you — eh? Come along!"

The joke was not such a bad one after all. A fire has been lighted for worse things than for the warming of a little half-dead bird. "You're an ugly little beggar — yes, you are!" he said. "Now be quiet while I light a fire with one match — one match, old man, is all that stands between you and death — yes, death!"

To the little bird it must have been an enormous giant that placed him so tenderly in a safe place, under the shadow of a great rock. The little bird watched with interest the arranging of that fire: gasped when the one match nearly went out: blinked when the flame fostered in the hollow of a gigantic hand flared up straight and strong — and yellow, the colour of its mother's eyes — a colour warm, comforting, and kind. The giant put the flame to the driftwood; it caught here, went out there, blazed up here; the little bird squeaked. "Wait a bit, sonny — it'll be all right. It's no joke dying when you're so young, is it? I had

measles myself long ago — here — draw up to the fire, closer — that's right — now for a little whiskey. Like it, old man? No, no more! True Scotsman that you are — later on, perhaps! Now go to sleep. I'll go and see what the others are doing — squawk if you're frightened — I shan't be far off."

It was n't such a bad joke after all. Bother the rain!

Meanwhile Marcus had taken all the photographs he could take and began to find Diana's joke — if joke it were — a poor one — and a stupid one. He made no vow to be amused by it — no uncle would. Watkins, anxious to help, said the only thing he could do to while away the time was to recite and he cleared his throat.

"If you would shout instead, I should be very much obliged," said Marcus; "some one might hear you."

Shouting was not at all the same thing to Watkins because it was a thing he did with great difficulty. However, he must try and he should be very glad if some one should chance to hear him because his landlady never did, and she always put the blame on his voice. He asked St. Jermyn to shout too, and St. Jermyn shouted.

"You should be a fine singer," said Watkins, clearing his throat again.

"Think so?" asked St. Jermyn, indifferent to praise.

"*I* do — indeed I do — don't you?"

"Yes, *I* do, of course."

"You? Oh, I see you are joking."

"I never felt less like joking — d' you know what a storm here can mean?"

"Not particularly here," said Mr. Watkins.

"I thought not. Shout!"

Watkins shouted. Marcus stood in the fine drizzling rain peering out to sea — and saw nothing.

Again St. Jermyn shouted.

"Be quiet!" said Watkins; his ears, attuned to the elements, he said, were the first to hear an answering call. It was the hoot of a steamer — at that moment of all sounds most blessed — even the voice of Diana must have been less sweet.

"It's a yacht," said Marcus.

"The Scotts, I expect," said Ralph St. Jermyn; "I told them if they should be round here to look us up." (What a comfortable thing it is to have cousins who have yachts! and other things, most desirable.) "They will find difficulty in getting a boat off — unless they can get under the lee of the island," he added.

Until that moment when Mrs. Scott held out two hands to Marcus to greet him, he had never

been able to excuse his want of judgment in having allowed himself to call her beautiful. He had always felt he had risked his reputation in so doing — his reputation as a judge of beauty. Now as he took her hands in his he found her of all women the most to be admired. There was something after all that was better than beauty of line, there was charm of expression, and she was, at this moment, perhaps, even beautiful: but he could not see because she wore a sou'wester well pulled down over her eyes, but he could imagine the kindness beaming from those eyes. The smile on her lips he could see, so that if he did not stand completely exonerated he at least must be largely excused — to a cold, wet man all women may seem beautiful.

"You dear moist things," she said, "how did you get stranded here?"

A few minutes after they had left the island, and Marcus was being ministered to by Mrs. Scott, Miles Hastings came in search of him. He shouted; but there was no answer except the screeching of birds as they flew up in their thousands at his approach. There was no sign of man. Was this another joke? — this time a poor one — a very poor one? It had not been Diana's fault that the day had turned out wet; but this was childish. He walked on and shouted again. There was still no answer. The waves hurled themselves against the

rocks, making a noise like the booming of guns — old Watkins had said that. It was quite evident that by some miraculous chance the others had got off the island, and had forgotten him. He wondered that St. Jermyn had forgotten him: perhaps he had not — that was another way of looking at it!

There was nothing to be done so he went back to the cave, where he found that the little bird, at all events, had not forgotten him. "What shall we do?" he asked, and the little bird said nothing — how should he know when he had lived so short a time — and knew nothing as yet of the division of days? Breakfast, lunch, dinner, were to him as one. He would have no divisions between them — if he had the ordering of things.

There was one thing Hastings could always do, and that anywhere, no matter where — think of Diana! He pulled up the collar of his coat closer round his ears, sat down in the best shelter he could find, picked up the little bird, told it to be good, and proceeded to think of Diana. If she had forgotten him the situation was about as bad as it could be, but he was convinced something must have happened — a thousand things might have happened. The motor launch might have gone wrong — if it had, then she might be in danger. He sprang up to look. "All right, old chap, I won't

drop you." He looked first one way, then another, and in neither direction could he see anything. A veil impenetrable hung between him and the mainland. The storm raged — more and more furiously. He knew it must spend itself in time, it was bound to. Diana at that moment was wondering what he was doing?

She could never have guessed that he was greatly exercised over the feeding of his young charge with bits of sardine — meant for Marcus. That done he was going to think about her. That he would think about her she might have guessed — but she could hardly have guessed how tenderly he was going to do it.

XVII

It 's a good joke that keeps out the rain, stays the wind, and makes the fire burn brightly.

DOWN on the shore of the loch Diana waited, buffeted by the wind, drenched by the rain. Her hair loosened by the wind blew into her eyes. She pushed it back impatiently: she was waiting for the storm to clear. So soon as the clouds broke, and she saw light on the horizon, and the waters were stilled, she would send the launch for Uncle Marcus. That he must by this time be suffering from congestion of the lungs, she was gloomily certain. There was now no question as to which of the men she loved; she loved them all, in the sense, at least, that there was not one of them she would n't marry to save him from drowning, or from pneumonia. Not one! She had only meant to be funny and she had not been funny. A poor joke was a crime in itself — nothing excused it. If it had been a good joke they would all have forgiven her, but what with the rain and the wind and the island — horrible at all times — she had sinned beyond forgiveness. Oh, to be with Aunt Elsie — the peace of it — the perfect peace! The memory of the sun-steeped garden, with the

booming of bees — so different from the booming of waves — of the scent of the roses, was more than she could bear — and the deliciousness of Shan't became an aching memory.

Pillar was watching, too, clad in oilskins and wearing a sou'wester. He made the agony still more acute, by carrying a rope. As Napoleon is pictured standing wrapt in melancholy, so stood Pillar — awaiting the worst.

Suddenly he stiffened and came towards her, as though, she thought, he were in London, about to announce a visitor. "Mr. St. Jermyn, miss," he said. She had been right, he was a butler again announcing a visitor, and never was visitor so welcome as this one.

"You!" she cried, as St. Jermyn came towards her across the sandy bay and took her hands in his.

"I am abjectly sorry," she said, and withdrew them gently, explaining they were wet. Then she asked him if he had forgiven her, which was a dangerous question to ask.

"Yes . . . now," he said, with a still more dangerous emphasis.

"Why now?" she asked — a foolish question to ask. She might have guessed why.

"Don't spoil it," he said gently.

" I only meant it as a joke — leaving you on the island, I mean. And then, when I got back and was

going to send the launch to fetch you, the storm had got up and the men said the sea was too rough."

"Why did you leave us?"

"As a joke! I told you." It was awful to have to go on explaining that the idiotic thing she had done was a joke.

"For no other reason?"

"I was tired of so many men, that was all!"

"You could n't put up with one, I suppose, who is very humble and does n't ask much?"

"No — at the moment I want you all — tell me, how did you get off the island?"

"The Scotts picked us up. They were out fishing or had been before the storm got up. There was a little difficulty in sending out the boat for us, but they managed it — they got under the lee of the island. Your uncle is anxious about you — he is afraid you are wet — you are!" St. Jermyn put his hand on her arm.

She moved away. "Not really wet," she said; "a little damp, but what does it matter how wet I am now you are all back."

"We are not all back. Hastings is still on the island."

The wind and rain had stung Diana's cheeks to a vivid colour and she wore a blue hood drawn over her hair and wore it as St. Jermyn had

thought only an Irishwoman could wear it. He found her distractingly pretty.

"Still on the island? He must be frightfully wet," she said.

"And very hungry," he added.

"Oh — yes, perhaps — " Hunger she knew would not be the worst thing he had to bear. "But some one must fetch him."

"Yes, some one must fetch him. We forgot him, which is a thing I should not have thought I could possibly have done, whatever the others might do. The storm may clear off at any moment. They do in these parts as suddenly as they come up."

"But if it does n't clear up?"

St. Jermyn looked at her — then out to sea and back again to her.

"If you want him to be fetched I will fetch him — for *you*."

"Why for me?"

"Because you want some one to go and I want to please you — is that reason enough?"

"Do you mean that if I did n't want him fetched you would n't go?"

"I mean that. I would let some one else go."

"Why not let some one else go now, then? A man on an island must be fetched. Why should you make it a personal thing?"

"Because I want everything between you and

me to be personal. I want my chance, that's all. You say a man on an island must be fetched. Do you realize that for me to do it is an act of heroism? Supposing it would suit me that Hastings should stay forever on the island, what then? Suppose that in fetching him off the island I know I destroy my one chance of happiness, and I still fetch him — for your sake — what does that argue?"

"I can't argue — I hate it. He is cold and wet — he is cold and wet because I behaved like an idiot — he must be fetched."

"Many a time during the last few days I have wished to drown him."

Diana said she did n't believe him, but he assured her it was true. "Just as heartily as he has wished to drown me," he added.

That Diana refused to believe.

"No? Well, then, his position is evidently more assured than I imagined it, and he is a more fortunate man than I am — he can afford to be magnanimous. Well, I am going to fetch him for your sake — you can't rob me of that nobility of character — I shall fetch him in order to make you happy — just as I would do anything else in the world to make you happy. It will make you happy — I should like to be certain of that — before — "

Diana said of course it would make her happy

that any one cold and miserable should be made warm and happy, "But I don't want you to run any danger — that I would n't face myself. I will come with you."

"Will you?" The thought of an hour — or as long as he liked to make it — alone with Diana was a delirious thought — less delirious was the thought of the return journey with Hastings in the boat. Hastings with the glamour of martyrdom upon him would be invulnerable. St. Jermyn said he was n't sure that Hastings would like that, and Diana asked why? He would be glad to see her, she knew.

"Without me — yes, but with me? What do you think?"

"Why should he mind?" she asked; then added, "It will be safe for you to go, though?"

If it were not would she mind? he asked her.

She answered, of course, why not? If she had proved herself devoid of humour, it did not show she was heartless.

"I wish I understood you — perhaps if I did I should be even less happy than I am. It's clearing, I'll go; any message for him?"

She shook her head — then said: "My humble duty, perhaps — "

"I am glad you did not ask me to take him your love because I should have kept half for myself —

but if you would trust it all to me — to give what I like of it to Hastings — "

Diana, interrupting him, said she was tired of jokes. So was he, he vowed: he was in deadly earnest. "By the way — if in earnest I asked you — 'Will you marry me?' What should you say?"

"I should say — 'Is this a serious proposal?'"

"And if I said 'Yes' — what should you say then?"

"I should say, it was too windy to hear — too wet to answer — too cold to marry."

"Too cold — that's it! Is n't it? Why are you so cold?"

"The wind — I can't hear — I told you!"

"I am very serious — it's no joke — "

Diana looked at him. "Are you really serious?" she asked.

He said he was very serious.

"Then I, too, am very serious. I should say I was very sorry, but I could n't."

"Would you say why?"

"I should say it had nothing to do with the weather — the wind or the rain — but just to do with my heart."

"You would mean that seriously?"

"I should mean it very seriously."

"Then I shall not propose."

"It would be a careless thing to do."

She went into the Lodge, very unhappy, very wet, and very much perturbed. She had a bath, dressed for dinner, and went downstairs to meet Uncle Marcus. Uncle Marcus was clean and dry and dressed for dinner. And he was very serious. Not at all a nice Uncle Marcus: but Diana was quick to see the justice of this. There was no reason he should be nice.

"You were extremely foolish," he said, "and Hastings is still on the island." He did n't look up from the "Scotsman" he was reading. Diana said Mr. St. Jermyn had gone to fetch him.

"Why St. Jermyn, when there are plenty of men about?"

"He went to please me," said Diana, sitting down on the table — an attitude of hers Uncle Marcus particularly disliked.

"Because he is in love with you he goes to fetch another man who is also in love with you. You will find it difficult to choose between them. You are under an obligation to one and you have — "

"Captain Hastings would never retaliate."

"Don't ask me to help you, that's all."

"Aunt Elsie will help me."

Uncle Marcus put down the "Scotsman." Diana had taken his middle stump with a fast underhand ball — so he would have described it.

"My dear child," he said, "don't do anything

rash — it's all perfectly simple. What has happened to you has happened to most women — girls — I expect — attractive girls, I mean. You are, I am sure, in no way to blame . . ."

"Let me get on to the sofa, darling," said Diana; "there, that's right, now go on."

"What was I saying?" resumed Uncle Marcus. "You are in no way to blame — "

"I am kissing my hand to you hard," said Diana, from the depths of the sofa.

"Well, don't interrupt me. I was saying, you are in no way to blame. Men must take their chances. It happens that two men are in love with you — two at least — both are excellent young men. It is perhaps difficult for you to choose between them, for in your inexperience you possibly hardly realize what it is you want — what kind of life would most appeal to you — let me help you! St. Jermyn is heir to large estates — he is going into Parliament. I am told he will make a name. He speaks well — has something to say — and says it clearly. Hastings, as A.D.C. to your father, has seen life from a different point of view. He has walked too much, perhaps, on red carpet — has seen the world too much, perhaps, from the Government House point of view; but he has plenty of brains and is no doubt older than he looks. His boyish manner makes him seem younger

than he is. He was telling me something of his prospects last night when St. Jermyn interrupted us. It seems he will have a certain amount if not very much — but as I have told you, I am perfectly willing to help you to marry the man you really love. He undoubtedly has high ideals and a great reverence for women — so, for the matter of that, has St. Jermyn, very markedly so. Of course — "

Uncle Marcus, touched by the depth of his own understanding, turned to look at Diana — she was fast asleep.

And while she slept Hastings on the island was thinking of her. He had first heard of her, loved to hear of her: he had fallen in love with her because of the look in her mother's eyes when she spoke of her, because of the way her father smiled when he thought of her.

Lady Carston had never exactly described her — had never said how extraordinarily beautiful her eyes were — had never said anything about the colour of her hair — had never said that she looked like a lovely boy (which, of course, she did) — had never really said anything. It was the way she had said "My Diana" that had been so wonderful — it was as if she had taken a child up in her arms and kissed her — "My Diana!" "Mine, too," said Hastings. The little gull squawked at

him — a belligerent little devil he was — "Yes, mine," said Hastings, "and in the days to come — don't you forget it!"

No, Lady Carston had n't said much, considering all the things she might have said. Then the photograph. He had found it lying about. He had thought it a pity it should get lost — Hastings here felt in his pocket — it was all right. Then he had seen her only a short time ago for the first time — it seemed in some ways years ago — and she was more than he had ever thought she could be — more adorable, more beautiful. He had much to think about. He did n't care how much it rained — he would have been happier, of course, if St. Jermyn had been on the island too: he had never so earnestly desired his presence: but it was no good worrying. Back to Diana! He had much to think about — how she looked at breakfast — at shooting-lunches — walking — fishing! He could see her in tweeds — in chiffons — with her hat on — without it. He could picture her — dared to picture her — a solemn moment this (in the booming of the waves breaking on the rocks he could hear church bells — in the wind the swelling of an organ) in her wedding-dress! A rather wonderful sight — dear old Marcus giving her away — no, Sir Eustace stepped forward here — Lady Carston, too, looking splendid, of course — with the " Diana

look" in her eyes. Wait a bit, though — out of the mist came a small woman, a little less beautiful than Lady Carston — perhaps because as yet she lacked the "Diana look" in her eyes. She had another look in her eyes, though — a more familiar look. She became clearer, clearer than all the rest. Sir Eustace stepped back, then Lady Carston made way — his mother remained — and Diana; and his mother took Diana in her arms — and her eyes had the "Diana look" after all. His mother! "Be quiet, my son," — this to the little bird.

Back went his thoughts to the years when he had not known Diana. Yet it must have been of Diana he and his mother had so often talked. He remembered particularly one evening when they had sat over the fire at home and she had spoken to him of things of which she said she would not have spoken if he had had a father to do it; and he remembered saying that no father could have said so wonderfully what she had said. Yes, of course; if it was not actually of Diana his mother had spoken, it was because of the Diana who should some day be his — he saw that now! Wonderful people — mothers! Back to Diana herself — he had skipped some years in his thoughts. Distance sets no limit to our thinking — he and Diana had been married some time — there was a question of her going or not going to a ball. (A Viceroy

and A.D.C. here floated across the misty picture.) She had gone to a ball. It was their first difference — it could not be described as a quarrel. In the small hours of the morning she had come back, and into his room. He was pretending he had been asleep! The diamonds glittered on her arms, round her neck, in her hair. He did n't pause to consider where the diamonds had come from. In novels, from which he had borrowed his experiences of these things, the diamonds were always treated as a matter of course. They were stage properties. Diana was lovely in her defiance. She had enjoyed herself immensely! — Yes — she had danced with Captain M . . . slim — delicious thing that she was!

Then came the delicate scene. Hastings changed his position — disturbing the gulls, who had grown accustomed to trust him: he did n't see them, did not know he had abused that trust! It required all the gentleness there was in his strong nature to forgive Diana as beautifully as he meant to forgive her — all the tenderness he was possessed of must go to show her where in her innocence she had erred in judgment —

"Bored stiff, old chap?" asked St. Jermyn.

"How in the world did you get here? I thought you had gone," said Hastings, roused from his day-dream: robbed of his best scene.

"Diana asked me to fetch you."

"Mind the little bird," said Hastings sharply. "Look out where you're going!"

St. Jermyn had chosen a weapon at random with which to fight Hastings, but he had not thought to deal him so deadly a blow. He had dealt it in a moment of temper, resenting the way Hastings had spoken to him when he had come at great personal discomfort across a choppy sea to rescue him. He would put it right later: in the mean time Hastings deserved it whatever discomfort he suffered from the wound. By dinner-time St. Jermyn had forgotten he had called Diana anything but Miss Carston, and looked upon her as something beautiful and desirable, but out of his reach. If it became expedient for him to worship at some other shrine, he would think of her forever with reverence and gratitude. What did it matter what he called her? He knew she would never respond. To Miles Hastings it mattered enormously what St. Jermyn called her.

But to Ralph St. Jermyn his career mattered more than the name of any woman; it had become as a god to him. Whatever happened nothing must interfere with that. He owed it to himself — so he said — to succeed. His affection for Diana had been very sincere — politically so, at all events. It was as a politician — a successful politician — he had

imagined himself married to her. On first seeing her sitting at the head of her uncle's dinner-table in London, he had thought how delightful she would look in days to come, seated at the head of his. He went further still and saw her in Downing Street—a graceful, beautiful, and satisfying vision, standing at the top of the staircase, for choice. She had a way of talking to every one and any one that was particularly attractive, and to a Member of Parliament — although only a prospective one — more than attractive. She would be, as his wife, a valuable asset. There was no one who seemed too old to interest her: no one too young. She could talk to a man of those things in which he was particularly interested, yet was quick to see if they were just the things he at that moment most earnestly wished to forget. Tired men in talking to her forgot they were tired: old men that they were no longer young. These undoubtedly were valuable social gifts. At times she could talk of things of which she knew very little, but there were many who would not be quick enough to discover it, and she would be quick enough to discover those that were. Those people she could make talk and she would listen. St. Jermyn saw all this, saw she was still very young, and it was easy enough to imagine what she would be when she was older. She would speak well, he was sure of

that, she was without self-consciousness, and had a quaint turn of mind that would be useful at election times, and at all times delightful. If it was as a hostess he had fallen in love with her, it was also as a girl and a woman: but he knew she did not care for him, and the thought of his career helped him to bear the blow. He had still something to live for. So when he got back to the Scotts' — having quite forgotten he had called Diana "Diana" to Hastings, and being perfectly innocent of the havoc he had wrought — he was feeling sorry for himself: and saw himself as an interesting young man recovering from a love-affair: wondered how it would read when his life came to be written and wondered if any one writing of it would do justice to his tenderness? He had an undefined feeling that every one must be a little kinder to him than usual, to make up, as it were. So when he found Sheila Scott sitting in a window-seat in the great hall, reading "Hansard," he felt very much drawn to her, and caused her an agony of shyness by forcing her to say why she was reading anything so dry. She found it difficult to say, "Because you said the other day that some one should look something up in 'Hansard.'" He did n't know that in the eyes of this dear little red-haired, freckle-faced girl — born to be a beauty yet — he was a hero. If he had seen Diana in Downing Street — Sheila had seen

him there dozens of times, in different guises: hardly ever as himself, which would have distressed him. She had seen him — Lohengrin at Downing Street: Sir Philip Sidney at Downing Street: Sidney Carton at Downing Street: the Scarlet Pimpernel even, at Downing Street. He had been her every hero in turn, and always Prime Minister in addition to everything else. He could n't know this, but he had taken the book away from her: holding her wrists until she had promised to give it to him. Finally she had given it to him and he had read aloud to her from its pages. Dull reading enough; but to her nothing like it had ever been written. Her eyes grew larger and larger, and her lips parted as she listened to the charming modulations of his voice. St. Jermyn was just discovering how really pretty she was; had just won from her the promise to read all his speeches, if ever they came to be published, and she had just said, " I will " — and no "I will" was ever more solemnly said — not even in St. Paul's, Knightsbridge — when her mother came into the hall.

"Don't worry Ralph, darling," she said. "She's so fond of fairy stories — even at her age," — this to Ralph as Sheila left them, and Ralph smiled as his eyes followed her.

"You will remember she is only a child?" Mrs. Scott said gently as she took Sheila's seat.

St. Jermyn wondered if she were such a child, after all?

"Perhaps," said her mother, "it is not so much that she's a child as that I want you to remember she is a woman. Am I very difficult to understand?"

Ralph thought he understood her perfectly.

"You know, Ralph, I am being absolutely frank with you; the child is very fond of you but we both know — both she and I — that you are fond of some one else. You won't think because she's rather a nice thing, and young, that she — "

St. Jermyn interrupted her. "My dear Janet," he said, "I quite understand. The truth is I was feeling the want of a little sympathy — it is quite true, I did care enormously for some one — but she does n't care for me, and I am going to devote myself to politics — it's horrible to have to admit it, but I am afraid they will always come first with me. I shall some day, I am sure, make a very good and devoted husband, I feel certain of that — and I believe I could make a woman happy, but her interest in life must be — not my interests — but *Me*. I wonder if you understand — I am showing myself in a very poor light."

Mrs. Scott rose from the window-seat, and laying her hand on his shoulder said, "My dear boy, in a very bad light — but I don't believe you are

half so selfish as you make out. The day will come when you will fall desperately in love — don't, I most earnestly beg of you, wait till Diana is married, and then fall in love with her — for your sake, not hers! She would run no danger — but don't do it! It really need not be part of a political life — and don't think too much of that life of yours that may some day be written. Have you forgiven me?"

St. Jermyn was almost sure he had. If forgetting is forgiving he very soon forgave her. What he did not forget was the sight of that absurd child sitting in the window-seat reading "Hansard." How he wished it had been Diana who for his sake had read it!

XVIII

If a man be kind to a pretty woman shall
it not be counted to him for righteousness?

WHEN Elsie Carston got the letter from Diana with its P.S., pregnant with meaning, asking her to telegraph for her at once on any pretext she chose, Elsie was triumphant. Marcus had failed. Not even the attractions of Scotland could hold Diana. She was evidently dying to get back to her aunt. It was no good forcing things down the throats, as it were, of young people: it was not what you gave them that counted, it was what you were to them.

"Shan't, Diana is coming back," she announced with pride. This was her triumph — she was the chosen one.

"Then shall I go to my darlin' Uncle Marcus?" asked Shan't, radiant; "oh, do let me — for once."

"No, dear, Uncle Marcus won't want you."

"Why won't he?"

"I don't know why, but he won't!"

"Then I shall write to him," said Shan't — "a very, very long letter, and he will write back and ask his darlin' little Shan't to come and stay with

him — see if he does n't!" And Shan't opened her eyes wide — and nodded her head at Aunt Elsie three times. It was not what Shan't said, it was the way she said it that Aunt Elsie found so cruel. Why had this wretched uncle ever come into their lives? For years he had refused to accept responsibilities, and now that the children had come to an age when they were most charming and attractive, he had suddenly awakened to a belated sense of duty. It was very annoying. But Diana was coming home and Elsie went up to tell Mrs. Sloane so.

She at least would rejoice with Elsie and would not affect an absurd love for Uncle Marcus. Shan't must have known how very disagreeable it was always hearing Marcus talked of as if he were the only uncle in the world. Elsie found Mrs. Sloane where she best loved to be, in the garden. From the seat on which she sat she looked through a gap cut in the tall yew hedges on to the range of hills — blue in the distance. Between her and the hills were golden cornfields, green fields, fields where the red soil was newly turned, and trees — dark fir trees standing like sentinels against the sky-line, plumed beeches, spreading oaks — and at her feet every flower that grows, rioting, singing at the tops of their voices, in wide borders, for flowers do sing for those who love them. Was it any wonder

that her face was beautiful when she turned it in welcome towards Elsie?

"Proud woman!" said Elsie, "I see in your smile the measure of your penstemons; in your eyes the pride of your hollyhocks; in your whole demeanour the glory of your garden. I don't believe there is any woman more difficult to bear with than she for whom all things grow."

Mrs. Sloane supposed it was not of gardens, though, that Elsie had come to talk. Her look was not of gardens. Their look of peace was not hers: there was something of aggression in her manner. It could not be directed against a woman so peaceable, so peace-loving as herself. She smiled, and Elsie was bound to admit she was right.

"Yet you are an aggravating woman, with your perfections always before us. Tommy Wandle told me last night he had been to see your new pig-sties. He was so awe-struck that I asked him what they were like, and he said, 'I thought they was a post-office, miss.' Now a woman whose pig-sties are like post-offices is not a neighbour to be loved as one's self, but lend me your attention, for I am in trouble."

There was no nearer way to the heart of Mrs. Sloane than this.

She begged Elsie to tell her everything, which Elsie did, and Mrs. Sloane was delightfully inter-

ested. She asked just the right questions — a great art this, and one that makes dear friends of those who possess that power of discrimination. She was shocked at Shan't's love of change, and hoped with Elsie that nothing of an unhappy nature had occurred at Glenbossie. It was possible, of course, that Diana had had some little love-affair.

"Impossible!" said Elsie, "she would have told me."

"She may be coming home in order to do that."

Of course, that was possible, Elsie admitted, and added: "There is a Captain Hastings there."

Mrs. Sloane wondered if he could be the son of her old friend? If he were and resembled his father and grandfather, she had every reason to believe the danger to Diana must have been considerable — it was quite possible she was coming home to bring good news.

"Then there is Mr. St. Jermyn too."

Mrs. Sloane looked serious. Diana had been subjected to great danger, on all sides — and they, too, of course, had run considerable risks of unhappiness. Mr. Maitland was a clever match-maker and he had chosen very well. One man was rich and the other he could help to make rich. Diana was very happily situated with an uncle so

rich and so devoted — devoted from a sense of duty only, of course, said Mrs. Sloane.

"But he is a very kind man," she added; "here is evidence of it." And she drew a letter from a bag that lay beside her on the seat. She opened it and read: "'I cannot tell you what I feel about Mr. Maitland — he is a perfect angel — and I shall love him as long as I live and we shall pray for him every night of our lives.'

"High praise that," said Mrs. Sloane, smiling; "it comes from a very pretty young woman too."

"I don't say he would n't be kind to a pretty young woman and I am not sure that it is greatly to his credit to admit it," said Elsie.

"Elsie, Elsie," said Mrs. Sloane, laughing, "I see what was once a charming and delightful nature growing warped and — shall we say a little soured? — and all because a man — in every other way we will admit it, depraved and horrible — is kind to the children of his sister."

"Not soured," said Elsie, laughing; "I'm quite nice really — I don't really dislike him, even, but I do resent his suddenly awaking to his responsibilities and treating me as though I had no right to exist." Then she added: "But tell me about this young woman — if it can be told."

It could be told, and Elsie learned how much Shan't had had to do in the matter: how she had

drawn Uncle Marcus into the affair, and at the end of the story Elsie could not easily impute any great blame to Uncle Marcus.

"I think," said Mrs. Sloane, "he will receive a shock one of these days and we must do what we can to help him to bear it."

"You don't mean he — cared for her?" asked Elsie.

"No — but I am quite certain one of these days — very soon, perhaps — he will receive a piece of wedding cake, and with it a card, printed in silver, and the name Madder will be crossed out and the name Flueyn will remain — also in silver. Socially it will shock him — pain him that he could have been so kind to any one so lacking the social sense — but she will be very happy."

"Was she — is she — very pretty?" asked Elsie.

"She is very pretty — I used to think particularly pretty when she raised her doggy eyes to the defenceless Uncle Marcus, for he was defenceless until he knew she wanted to marry Mr. Flueyn."

Elsie said he might have guessed she did n't care for him, and Mrs. Sloane said that was a thing men hardly ever guessed.

"How do you understand men so well?" asked Elsie, and Mrs. Sloane said it was perhaps because she loved them so well.

Aunt Elsie sent off the telegram, of course making no excuse. If she wanted Diana she was perfectly at liberty to say so; she was delighted she was coming — delighted!

But when Diana came she was not so delighted, because it was a different Diana who came back from the one who had gone away. She was reserved, a little hard, and a little defiant. Aunt Elsie hoped she would look better after a night's rest, she must be tired and hungry. Diana admitted hunger: she was frightfully hungry. Aunt Elsie, up in arms at once, supposed Uncle Marcus had at least given her a dinner-basket? Diana, defending Uncle Marcus, said he was in no way to blame. He had given her a parcel, she had asked for it instead of a basket; but when she had opened the parcel, she discovered the only things in it were two halves of a cocoanut shell and a flask of whiskey — not sustaining in the ordinary sense of the word.

"Do you mean to say," asked Aunt Elsie with a righteous indignation the force of which shook her, "that he played a practical joke? — a man of his age — how abominable!"

Diana vowed it was too good a joke for Uncle Marcus to have perpetrated, and as a matter of fact it was the only part of the journey she had enjoyed, which was quite true, though she could not tell Elsie why. If Miles could play a practi-

cal joke, she had argued to herself, he could not be so angry as she imagined he was, though why he should be angry at all she could not imagine. Mr. St. Jermyn had understood the joke, poor as it had been, but Miles had not spoken to her after he came back from the island and the next morning he was gone. She could not tell Aunt Elsie this because it would mean telling her a great many other things that she could not tell any one.

Miles had not even shown her Robinson, the little bird he had found on the island — every one else had seen it and it had pecked every one's fingers but hers.

The mistake Pillar had made with the luncheon-basket remained the one bright spot on a dark horizon because she did not know it was Pillar's mistake.

"What is Scotland like?" asked Shan't.

"There are rocks and burns — and hills and lochs," said Diana absent-mindedly — for her heart was still there.

"How lovely!" sighed Shan't, knowing nothing of lochs and burns, but Diana had been there and Uncle Marcus was there and she did so want to go. "And what else?"

"On an island in the middle of the sea there was a little bird that would have died if some one had n't rescued it."

"In the mid-dle of the sea?" asked Shan't — incredulous.

"Yes."

"And did some one rescue the darlin' little bird?"

"Yes — "

"What was it called?"

"Robinson."

"Did it know it was?"

"Was what?"

"Called by that name?"

"No — it was christened that by the — person who rescued it."

"Not properly christened?" A good Churchwoman was Shan't.

"No — not quite properly."

"And what else are there in — Scotland?"

"There are grouse and deer and fish and heather — and moss — "

"Do you like it better than anywhere?"

Diana did n't answer.

"Better than the seaside?" went on Shan't.

Still Diana did not answer.

"Better than Hastings?" persisted Shan't.

"What did you say, Shan't?"

"I said — did you like Scotland best or — Hastings, where we go to the seaside sometimes?"

"I like Hastings best," said Diana, and she caught Shan't in her arms; "but, darling, you must never tell any one — promise."

"Scotland would n't mind, because you do like it, too, don't you?"

"I love it."

"I wish I could go there!"

Diana did n't see why she should n't. She would write and suggest it to Uncle Marcus: she had to write and explain, so far as she could, her running away. He would be very angry, she knew. She wrote:

DEAREST MARCUS — Uncle no longer — I feel the age you don't look, so I shall call you Marcus. It was cowardly to run away, was n't it? But I could not stand the atmosphere, it was too heavy. I was an idiot, but not more than that, and it was a poor joke, I admit it. I had a lovely time in spite of it, and I thank you thousands of times. I want you to ask Shan't. She would love it so, and she would be no trouble whatever. John could look after her all day. I really think she would amuse you. I am glad I came home; Aunt Elsie, I am afraid, is in for an attack of sciatica. She was so pleased to see me. Who else has such a ridiculous aunt and such an absurd uncle as I have?

She was going to enclose a letter from Shan't, having promised not to look at it.

"Promise?" asked Shan't, folding it.

Diana promised. There was nothing Shan't liked better than to write letters all by herself.

This is the one she wrote all by herself that Diana enclosed in hers "without looking":

Dear uncle marcus, I mean my dearling will you ask me to come to scotland becawse I do love it so diana is very well but she loves hastings please say yes darling uncle marcus from your loving SHAN'T.

And this is the letter that brought Uncle Marcus down from Scotland by the first train. All personal feeling must now go to the wind. What Miss Carston felt about the matter he did not care. She must tell him what she knew. She must help him. There could be now no jealousy between them. The child they loved was unhappy; he had seen that. Miss Carston must by now have seen it. Their hearts were united in a common cause. Diana must be happy. If she loved Hastings, it was the duty of Uncle Marcus, without making it difficult for Diana, to find out if Hastings loved her. Marcus was morally certain he did. Of course he did! He had fished with her and had shot with

her; they had walked together and talked — Heavens, how they had talked! Did n't Marcus know it to his cost? But nothing would matter if Diana were happy in the end and Elsie must help to that end. It was not a question of which of them had the means to make her happy; she might take all the *kudos* so long as Diana was happy.

Never had Uncle Marcus reached such heights of self-effacement. He now saw clearly enough that the feud between him and Miss Carston had been in the nature of a joke — a poor joke, but a joke. It had amused them to imagine themselves enemies. They were now fighters in a common cause.

Dear little Shan't had told him all he wanted to know — in her innocence she had lightened his path and he now saw clearly. It only remained for Aunt Elsie to be as frank with him as he meant to be with her.

Aunt Elsie, knowing nothing of all this, was laid up on the sofa with an attack of sciatica and with her was Diana sympathizing.

Diana meanwhile was looking out of the window. "Why, there's Uncle Marcus!" she exclaimed. "What in the world has he come for?"

As Uncle Marcus jumped out of the car a thought struck her. "Aunt Elsie," she said, "you are to say nothing to Uncle Marcus, swear —

promise — I trust to you — here is your chance — promise!"

"What do you mean? I know nothing."

"That is not the point: you are not to discuss me! I won't have it! Promise? Darling — I love you *so* — promise!"

Aunt Elsie promised; Diana had taken her middle stump with a "googlie." Rebecca came to say, would Miss Carston see Mr. Maitland for a few moments? He had come from Scotland on purpose?

Miss Carston would see Mr. Maitland, and this — according to Diana — is what happened —

XIX

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

MISS CARSTON . . . . . *Aunt Elsie*
MR. MAITLAND . . . . . *Uncle Marcus*
MARCUS, DINAH, PEGGY . . . . . *Dogs*

MISS CARSTON *on the sofa, in the library at Bestways, suffering from sciatica.* MR. MAITLAND *in an armchair. He has come from Scotland anxious to discuss with her a matter of vital importance.*

MISS CARSTON. Diana? Oh, yes, she said to me yesterday — Oh, Mr. Maitland, open the door, please. It's Marky!

(MR. MAITLAND *opens the door,* MARKY *walks in very slowly.*)

MISS CARSTON. Well, Marky man, coming to his mother, is he? There's a darling — did his ear hurt — not scratch-scratch — beauts-beauts; not scratch-scratch. When mother's up, she brushes the darling!

MARCUS. (*Scratch, scratch, thump, thump.*)

MR. MAITLAND. Yes, what did Diana say?

MISS CARSTON. Oh, Mr. Maitland, please open the door, there's Peggy — she's such a wild woman.

(UNCLE MARCUS *opens the door.* PEGGY *rushes in like a whirlwind.*)

MISS CARSTON. Mind mother's leg — oh, Peggy!

(PEGGY *jumps up, kneads* ELSIE'S *leg, walks up and down it.*)

MISS CARSTON. Sit still, darling — Marky, don't scratch —

Peggy, lie down — hurt mother's leg-leg — naughts, naughts — oh, Peggy! (*To* MR. MAITLAND.) She's been like this ever since she was born. Oh, Mr. Maitland, would you open the door? I think Marky wants to go out. I am so sorry: if I were up this would n't happen. (*In a loud voice to* MARCUS:) Marky, walkie, walkie!"

(MR. MAITLAND *opens the door.* PEGGY *bolts out,* MARCUS *walks out slowly, and* DINAH *slithers in.*)

MISS CARSTON. Mother's lamb — such a darling — beauts-beauts — good-good — gal-gal — get up gently — clev-clev — never steps on mother's leg — lambkin — saint — look at mother — sweet-sweets — booful eyes! (*To* MR. MAITLAND.) Is n't she a darling?

MR. MAITLAND (*ignoring the question*). What did Diana say?

MISS CARSTON. There's Marky man; coming, darling. Let him in, please, Mr. Maitland — he's not haps-haps without his mother. Coming, darling!

(MR. MAITLAND *opens the door.*)

MISS CARSTON. Leave it open, please, then they can come in as they like — it will be less trouble.

(MR. MAITLAND *leaves the door open, returns to the armchair, sits down.*)

MR. MAITLAND. What did Diana say?

(*In rush all the dogs.*)

MISS CARSTON. Marky — Marky — Peggy — Peggy — Dinah — Dinah —! I must n't make them jealous — mother loves them all. Yes, darlings, mother does. Marky — don't scratch — Marky! stop! Peggy — mother's leg. Dinah, was little Dinah frights-frights? Go for walkie-walkie — Dogs! *do* you hear me when I speak?

(*Exeunt dogs.*)

MR. MAITLAND. What did Diana say?

At that moment Diana, Shan't, and the doctor came into the room.

"You, Uncle Marcus!" exclaimed Diana with rapture.

"Oh, have you come to fetch me, darlin' Uncle Marcus?" cried Shan't, ecstatically, throwing herself into his arms.

"Do you want her?" asked Aunt Elsie, who had much to make up, if anything could ever make up. She gave one hand to the doctor, the other to Marcus, dismissing him. "Did you really come to fetch her? It was good of you. Nannie will get her things together as quickly as possible."

Uncle Marcus said nothing — he was furious: he had not come to fetch Shan't and Miss Carston knew it.

Later in the day Diana threw her arms round Aunt Elsie and told her how wonderful the dogs had been — "too — too wonderful!"

Aunt Elsie thought she deserved some praise, and Diana allowed she had been too clever for words.

"But think of the cost," said Aunt Elsie, aching for sympathy.

Diana affected surprise. Did Aunt Elsie mean that she minded what Uncle Marcus thought of her? "It was n't as if you wanted to marry him, darling?" she said, seeking to comfort her.

Marry him? Elsie was horrified at the mere thought; but argued that, although you might not

want to marry a man, you might not necessarily want to appear an idiot in his eyes. Further, she vowed Diana must have marrying on the brain to have thought of such a thing; and Diana said, What if she had? Whereupon Elsie understood everything in a flash, as it were (so she said). Diana, steadying her, begged her not to understand too much — it was so dangerous — so bewildering — and so overwhelming — it should come gradually, not like an avalanche.

"But you must tell me, darling; think what I have done for you," pleaded Aunt Elsie. She deserved some reward.

There was nothing to tell. Diana said she had muddled it all. Then there had been something! It could be put right — there was no muddle so bad that an aunt could n't straighten it out! All eagerness was Elsie.

"Is n't there?" asked Diana. "Uncles and aunts are wonderful people." And she would say nothing more.

"It was rather brilliant on my part, though, was n't it?" asked Aunt Elsie, still longing for praise — if she had seemed foolish she would at least have been foolish in a good cause.

"Don't forget the dogs!" said Diana.

XX

It's a wide gulf that the arms of a child cannot bridge.

MARCUS refused to wait even for the joy of wresting Shan't from her aunt. He was furious. Miss Carston had deliberately made a fool of him; in doing it she had made a fool of herself, too, but that did not make it any the better. With herself she might do what she liked; but she had no right to treat him as she had done. He had come inspired with the best motives; had been thinking of nothing but the happiness of Diana. To secure that he had been willing to forget everything that had passed between himself and the aunt.

That there was something she had promised Diana not to tell him was quite evident, but she might have adopted some other means of keeping her promise. Was it likely he would have wished to hear anything Diana did not wish to tell him?

That was a question an injured man might ask himself without guessing the right answer.

He had said he would wait in London for Shan't — he could not disappoint the child, and her Nannie had promised to deliver her up the next day

with sufficient overalls, jerseys, shoes, and socks, etc., for a fortnight.

"You can manage the journey, sir?" Nannie had asked, doubting, and Mr. Maitland had said a housemaid was returning to Scotland with him who would look after her.

So Shan't went to Scotland, and about what happened on the journey Uncle Marcus forever held his speech, but he was a wreck when he got to Glenbossie, and was thankful to hand her over to a housemaid who could manage her. The travelling one had signally failed. "She did n't understand me a bit," said Shan't; "she simply could n't keep me in order, could she?" — this triumphantly to Uncle Marcus. "She could not," he agreed; whereupon she informed him that it was no use just telling her not to do things. "You must be firm," she explained.

"I see," said Uncle Marcus.

Shan't must have written a letter full of boastful arrogance to Dick, because she got one from him, by what she called "returnal post," and in it he said: "I don't suppose your place is like this — it 's simply toppin'. Mr. Taboret got forty brace of grouse to his own gun the other day, and not content with that effort he went out when it was yet light and got three salmon! I saw him do the mighty deed — then in the evening he danced —

he wears a kilt — does Uncle Marcus? This house is about as big as the Albert Hall in London, I should think, from what I can remember of it. They got four hundred brace of grouse the other day — I sat in a butt, with a Duke, I think he was, but he was n't at all a bad sort of chap; he wore a kilt too and his beard was red": in answer to which Shan't wrote a pithy post-card: "we shoot dere hear," which brought forth a stinging reply: "I have shot two roe *deer* — not *dere;* you spelt it wrong — write it out four hundred times — it's not supposed to be good form to shoot roe deer with a shot-gun; does Uncle Marcus?"

"Do you?" asked Shan't anxiously of her uncle, her sporting world trembling in the balance.

"No."

Shan't wrote, "He says he doesunt" — and there the correspondence ended.

To any reference on the part of Shan't to her darlin' Aunt Elsie, Marcus turned a deaf ear, and to Shan't a stony countenance, and Shan't learnt very quickly not to talk about her darlin' aunt, but, child though she was, she felt there was disloyalty in that, so she thought about her a great deal — and when Uncle Marcus said: "What are you thinking about, Shan't?" she would piously answer: "You would n't like if I said!"

She lo-oved Scotland. She bathed and she pad-

dled and she went out in a boat with John and she f-ished! And John spoilt her, as only a man knows how to spoil.

She quickly learnt at which farm — and it was at every farm — she could get oat cakes and milk at any time of the day, and she was convinced it was French the Scotch spoke, and when they called her wee, she said, "Mais non!"

She sat with joy under the Minister. The service was never too long, because at the end of it came a money-box on the end of a pole, which was poked into the face of every member of the congregation, and finally made its way upstairs and round the galleries, which perambulations she loved. She rode a cream-coloured pony, with a black stripe down his back, on the hill, and a fine swagger was hers as she rode up the steep, narrow tracks with Sandy and John walking one on either side of her, through the heather: she discoursing all the while on the differences between a church and a kirk — which were mainly, it seemed, the differences between dull bags or plates and a box on the end of a stick; serious differences, these. "There 's an a'ful difference between them whatever," agreed John, but then he agreed to everything she said.

She was frightfully spoilt and Marcus was not behind the others in doing his share of the spoiling.

So when she was thrown from the pony and lay in her bed unconscious, a black cloud hung over the Lodge of Glenbossie, and Marcus, in the depths of despair, wandered here and there unable to do anything because he had done everything that could be done and it had not availed. Sandy and John just stood around, to be there if anything should happen — and nothing happened, that was the worst of it. Anything — excepting, of course, one thing — would be better than this lying still — conscious of nothing. Mrs. Oven was so cross no one could go near her. It was the way sorrow took her, she told Pillar, who had dared to demand an explanation.

The household refused to be comforted, and when the Minister came to pray for the "wee lassie," Uncle Marcus turned upon him furiously, saying, "It 's not come to that yet," which was an old story, but it showed how true that old story was to human nature: and the Minister, no doubt, went on praying: being too devout a man to be deterred, and knowing probably that Mr. Maitland, like many another good man, had not yet met God face to face.

Then Aunt Elsie arrived wearing what Diana would have called a hat without a kick left in it, of which hat Marcus approved. It seemed impossible now to associate her with absurd be-

haviour. Here was no woman playing ridiculous jokes, with little fun in them, but a woman calm, composed, and most unhappy.

Marcus was glad she would n't have anything to eat until she had seen Shan't, and seen for herself how ill she was. Elsie thought it was impossible she could be so ill as Mr. Maitland had led her to expect; she was certain he exaggerated as all men did. The very fact of their strength made them overestimate the weakness of others. She followed him upstairs, and as he stopped at a door he put a finger to his lips. At any other time she might have resented this and might have said, Was it likely she would go into a sick-room talking and laughing? But now she nodded her head. She was an aunt subdued. She followed him into a darkened room: and a nurse rose from the bedside. She did not put her finger to her lips because she knew how unlikely it was that Shan't could be disturbed by anything.

"There's no change," she said.

"Go and rest," said Marcus, and she went; perhaps the calm grey eyes of Elsie gave her a sense of security. At all events, she did not question the right of the new-comer to wait and watch. Marcus sat down at one side of the bed, Elsie at the other. They seemed so near to one another, divided only by the ridge of bedclothes so slightly raised.

"Concussion," he whispered.

Elsie nodded; she never spoke. He wished she would say something, possibly: How terrible it must have been for him! Then he might have said: What a journey it must have been for her! But she said nothing. Her eyes never left Shan't's face. Sometimes Marcus looked from Shan't to Elsie. In the daylight darkness — the blinds were drawn — he could see, he thought, why it was the children were so fond of her, and why, if her brother in any way resembled her, Sibyl was so devoted to him. He liked her quietness — although she might, perhaps, have said a few words: but that was a thing no woman could do. If she had spoken at all she must have spoken too much.

And so Marcus and Elsie, when they were not eating or sleeping, and they ate very little and slept hardly at all, sat and watched. And while they watched, Elsie had time to discover that Marcus had nice hands and he to find that he rather liked the way her hair grew; and that was all. He was the uncle on the one side — she the aunt on the other — of Shan't's bed — so small a thing dividing them.

XXI

To the young woman God gives rich gifts: from the middle-aged woman He asks them back: to the old woman He gives them all again — for good.

MRS. SLOANE was distressed about Diana, and her old eyes were quick to see a change in the girl whose reticence about her visit to Scotland was unusual in one who was accustomed to confide.

When the news of Shan't's accident came her grief was unnatural in its overwhelming force. Diana looked reluctantly upon the black side of things: and was always eager to believe that things must come right. A happy Diana would have refused to believe that anything could happen to Shan't for the very good reason that she loved her. Here, then, thought Mrs. Sloane, was an accumulation of sorrow, sorrow, that had been held back by force, let go. The telegram had said nothing of danger, so Mrs. Sloane knew Diana was glad of the excuse to cry, and she, of course, was right, as understanding old women usually are.

So she set about to stem the tide of Diana's grief.

She wrote to Mrs. Hastings and begged the loan

of her son for a few days, because of those other days of long ago. She wanted to see what (she meant who) he was like: and, of course, Miles's mother was only too delighted any one should see what her son was like, so he was despatched to London — against his will — to see Mrs. Sloane: not to Bestways; that would have been too clumsy a move on the part of the old lady, and too obvious. She had yet to make a complete plan: London, at present, was as far as she had got in her manœuvres.

Just before she started Diana flew in — it was the word Mrs. Sloane invariably used to describe Diana's movements: she had a telegram in her hand which she gave in silence to Mrs. Sloane to read. And in silence Mrs. Sloane read it. Shan't was not so well.

"I must go to-night," said Diana.

"You must go, of course," said Mrs. Sloane, adding that she would have waited and gone with her, so far as London: but she had an engagement for luncheon.

So Mrs. Sloane went to London alone and drove straight to that hotel at which she knew a young man would like best to lunch: although she had a very shrewd suspicion that she was about to rob a young man of his rightful appetite. When she arrived at the hotel she went into one of the rooms

where she was most certain of seclusion, and sat down in one of the windows to wait. Personally she would have preferred one of the quieter, older-fashioned hotels: but this was a concession on her part to fashion and to youth.

She had only to wait a few minutes when into the room came a young man, and at the sight of him her heart stirred, for reasons of its own, not unknown to her. A vast area of rose-coloured carpet, a vista of mirrors, and rows of pillars generally have a dwarfing effect, but Miles Hastings looked very big and absurdly like his grandfather. Her heart was beating normally again as she rose to meet the young man, and going up to him she slipped her hand within his arm and gave it a little squeeze of affection. "How kind of you to come!"

He smiled, wondering what this dear old lady wanted.

"Let me look at you," she said. "You have grown!"

He said it was perhaps a long time since she had seen him.

"You were a baby in arms when I last saw you."

Miles Hastings laughed, and turned to look again at this old friend of his mother — and perhaps, he thought, of his father — and saw that her cheeks were flushed — most delicately flushed —

and her eyes were bright with excitement. He wondered why? There was nothing very exciting about him, he feared.

Mrs. Sloane gently directed him towards the sofa in the window.

"Now let me look at you properly," she said, putting up her glasses.

"Deal with me mercifully," he pleaded.

"I see no reason to do that," she answered.

"It's awfully good of you," he murmured.

"I am going to be much gooder than that — as Shan't says."

"Shan't?"

"Yes, Shan't; do you know her?"

"No." He did not know her, but he was beginning to understand the flush on the cheeks of the old lady and the light in her kind old eyes.

"That's a pity, as Shan't herself would say; but now to business. I want you to do something for me. I knew your grandfather; if that is not reason enough you must do it for me because I am old — and a woman, and because I want you to do it."

"I will do anything you ask me to do — because you are you."

Mrs. Sloane smiled: she was beginning to envy Diana.

"Some one I am very fond of is going to Scotland

to-night — she is unhappy and she is anxious. I cannot bear to think of her to-morrow morning."

"I guess — " he began.

Mrs. Sloane laid a restraining hand on his arm.

" — struggling for a breakfast-basket — there's no time at which you so much want a man, don't you agree? — even if you have a maid?"

Miles was ready to agree to anything.

"I have two conditions to make — one is that you do not see her, or speak to her to-night, and the other is that you leave her to-morrow morning, when you have seen her into the train which will take her to her destination — you agree?"

Miles agreed; adding, "I am wondering if you are an angel in disguise."

"In disguise? Is that quite kind?"

"Forgive me — when the gate of Heaven opens suddenly the light is blinding. You are a dear!" And he looked at her in a way that opened up a whole world of romance. If he should look at Diana to-morrow even as he had looked at an old woman to-day, Diana would possibly make a poor breakfast in the morning, but would be very happy some day.

At luncheon Mrs. Sloane and Miles were the object of a certain amount of speculation, and a greater amount of interest. By most people they were voted grandmother and grandson — by

others mother and son. Two people gave it up. One of them was a big young man with a shock of fair hair, and the other was the girl with him, who knew Mrs. Sloane had no son.

"Speak to her," said Mr. Flueyn.

Rose was shy. If the pillars and mirrors had not dwarfed Miles, they frightened her. She was as appalled by their magnificence as she was by that of her new hat. Her marriage had been so hastily arranged that only that morning had she had time to send Mr. Maitland his bit of wedding cake, and she had altogether forgotten Mrs. Sloane's.

"You look so pretty, darling," urged her husband, "she won't mind about the cake."

And Rose, taking courage, walked across to the table where Mrs. Sloane and Miles Hastings sat. With a pang she realized the extreme order of this young man's hair: then with a rush of loyalty she asked Mrs. Sloane if she might introduce her husband.

"My dear child, do, I shall be so glad to meet him."

And Rose motioned him to come, and across the room he came, like a breeze ruffling the surface of a loch. Mrs. Sloane felt braced at his approach, and, though suffering acutely under the force of his handshake, smiled bravely. To his question, What did she think of the wife? she answered that

she thought her radiantly pretty. To the question, What did she think of the hat? she less truthfully vowed it charming. To his account of how and why the marriage had been hastened on, she lent an interested attention, and when he and Rose had been made thoroughly happy by her charming appreciation of everything, and the promise of a present to come, they left: Rose returning to say hurriedly that she was so sorry she had forgotten the cake. It was coming! She hoped Mrs. Sloane had not thought her rude. "I only sent Mr. Maitland's to-day. I hope he won't think me rude not having sent it at once. He of all people in the world — I should never forget."

Mrs. Sloane was quite sure Mr. Maitland would not think her rude. Then she turned to Miles, wondering what he would say. She knew exactly what Marcus would have said — about the hat.

"Happy young things," said Miles, despatching them from his mind with a smile. Then he leant forward, as though some thought had suddenly struck him. "About those conditions you have exacted," he said; "supposing certain contingencies should arise, must I — am I in honour bound — to leave this — person of whom you are very fond when I have seen her into the train that takes her on — you know *where?*"

"That was one of my conditions! You accepted it!"

"Yes, and I mean to abide by it — but supposing — I only say supposing — it is more than I can bear; the separation, I mean; may I at the last moment jump into the guard's van, if I don't let her know I'm on the train? It's only a remote possibility, but I might feel unable to abide by your condition."

"You promised to — "

"And I mean to — but if I give my word of honour I can't break it — therefore, I only want your permission to do this in circumstances over which I might possibly have no control: if, let us say, she should look so beautiful that I lost my head — if by chance, let us say, she should smile at me — you know how she does smile — I suppose you do —! Well, may I use my own judgment? It only means that I shall be in the same train. I won't speak to her or let her see me?"

"Under very exceptional circumstances — and I leave it to your sense of honour not to make them exceptional — you may travel in the guard's van — without letting her know you are there." And Mrs. Sloane, looking at him, shook her head as old women will do in affectionate despair at those young people of whom they most particularly approve.

XXII

The best man on the train may be the guard in the van — make friends with him.

IT was not so easy for Miles to hide himself at Euston Station as Mrs. Sloane had seemed to imagine. He was one of those who show in a crowd, being bigger than most, and, according to his mother, handsomer. And he was a little reckless until he had seen the object of his search. Once he had seen Diana walk down the platform with her chin in the air, as was her habit, approved by her uncle, who thought she walked as a woman should walk, and as few did, he was more cautious, and dodged behind mountains of luggage, but never losing sight of the figure in blue tweed. She wore her hat well pulled down over her eyes, and he was glad. Once his he would want the whole world to see her, but till then he would have all men blind to her beauty. He bet himself five shillings she would buy "Blackwood" at the bookstall, and she bought it. Feeling himself the richer of five shillings — he held himself justified in giving it to the porter who was looking after her luggage: then he committed her to the care of the guard, and he asked nothing of the guard he was

not ready to pay for. At the last moment he took possession of his sleeping-compartment within a few doors of Diana's. Then he committed her into God's safe keeping for the night — the guard on the train and God in Heaven; she must be safe. To the guard he had offered money — to God he offered the rest of his life if He would only give him Diana, to take care of — forever. Was it irreverent? Far from it, never in his life had he felt more humbly reverent.

Diana as she travelled thought how different it had been so short a time ago when she had travelled up with Uncle Marcus. Now there was nothing to look forward to and everything to dread. Shan't might be dangerously ill! That she might not recover Diana would not have admitted even to herself. But there was the feeling underneath everything that life might not give her all she had asked of it. The thought was disquieting because she had asked of it only what she must have! Diana was young and she slept — although she had been certain she could not sleep — and she awoke in Scotland, and Scotland is Scotland and must not be denied. She demands, at least, that the traveller shall look out and wonder at her beauty. So Diana dressed and went out into the corridor and looked down into the glens, rushing past; on to the rowans, red with berries, and up

to the torrents of water that streamed down the mountain-sides. Life, after all, could not cheat her. The morning sang aloud for very joy; not only the burns and the waterfalls, but everything sang.

Then she discovered she was hungry and she was certain she could never get a breakfast-basket. Arrived at the station, where these things are to be had, for those who have the forethought to order them, she looked out of the window, and the first thing she saw was Miles Hastings striding towards her — followed by a man carrying two breakfast-baskets.

"You!" she exclaimed. "How did you get here?"

"By train, just as you did," he answered. "I knew your father would n't like it if you did n't have your breakfast properly. You see my duties don't end when I land in England. Will you come to another carriage? It's not very nice eating in a sleeping-berth, is it? Will you come? I have reserved a compartment. This most excellent man bears baps and bacon and eggs and marmalade and tea. Coming?"

Diana was already coming, curiosity, if nothing else, compelling her. How had he really come? She had little dreamed that all night he had been so close to her: that every time the train had stopped at a station he had mounted guard outside her door.

"Don't talk until you have had breakfast," he said; "then I want to talk to you very seriously — don't look so adorable, because it upsets me. I never imagined any one could look so clean as you look after a journey."

"And you have shaved, have n't you?" she asked; and he laughed and said he would n't be her father's A.D.C. if he had n't. Then he assured her — "Shan't is going to get quite well. I read up concussion, before I did n't go to sleep last night. Don't ask any questions! Never ask me to explain why I am here, because it cannot be explained except that there are more angels on this earth than even Heaven knows of. I always knew there was one — go on eating."

Diana reminded him that angels did not eat, but in spite of that he begged her to have some more. She could n't eat two eggs? Had she ever tried? She could n't remember that she had. Not even after hunting? No? They were dull things to talk about, anyhow! Should he put the baskets under the seat? He put them under the seat.

"Now tell me?" he said.

"Tell you what?" she asked.

"Why did he call you Diana?" Of enormous importance this: it had weighed on his heart for days, or weeks was it?

"Who?" asked Diana.

"Do you really not know?"

She said so many people had called her by her name: so few people called her by any one else's. She might n't have answered to Caroline if he — whoever he was — had called her that. Then she added: "It's quite a nice name, though, is n't it? It's a stately name."

"Diana — do be nice to me," he pleaded.

"Call me Caroline, and see."

He called her Caroline, and she put out her hand and withdrew it.

"Diana," he said, "don't tease me."

"If he — whoever he was — had called me Caroline you would n't have minded?"

"If he had said Caroline had sent him to fetch me off the island, I should n't have known who in the world Caroline was."

"It was then he called me Diana, was it?"

"Yes, it was then."

"How dared he spoil everything?"

"He did spoil everything; you admit it; then you were happy?" — this triumphantly. It was an admission on her part.

He was so desperately anxious she should admit she had been happy; but she was in a distracting and provoking mood. Why should she smile at the hills and not at him? "Were you happy, Diana? Tell me."

She nodded.

He wanted to know just how happy? Had she been as happy as he had been? It was not possible. She had not prayed for him every night as he had prayed for her — she could not say she had?

No, she could not; she had never even thought of him. But after they had met, he pleaded — then — had she not thought of him? They must compare notes. She vowed her notes were so lightly pencilled on her memory, she could hardly read them — a thought here, another there.

His notes were indelibly written on his heart. The first time he had seen her was one. He told her what he had thought of her. What had she thought of him? She would n't say. Driven to say something, she confessed she had thought him — tall — yes, tall *for his age* . . .

"Darling, don't look out of the window. I know your little nose by heart — I love your profile — but tell me, do you remember anything else, I mean what you thought of me — it sounds so conceited to imagine for one moment that you thought anything — but if you did — ?"

"Let me think — don't disturb me!" She shut her eyes, and said, "I will try to remember."

He waited. Was she really going to sleep? If he had been Uncle Marcus he would have been taken in; being more modern, he was not, but he had

never seen her asleep and she looked so lovely that he let her sleep on, which was not in the least what she had expected; moreover, it was very dull, so she opened her eyes and asked if she had been asleep? And when he said, "No," she vowed to herself this was no man to marry lightly — too unerring an intuition was his.

"Will you always know what I am thinking and feeling?" she asked.

He doubted it. He never knew of what she was thinking or what she was feeling. "Tell me something of what you feel." And she told him how hungry she had felt when she had travelled south, from Loch Bossie, and what a comfort the parcel had been, how glad she had been to see the cocoanut shells.

"Why?" he asked.

Because, she said, she thought — as he had condescended to a joke — a bad one, of course, but a joke — it showed he could not be so angry with her after all.

"And that comforted you?" Another admission, this!

"Yes, it comforted me."

"Then you must have minded my being angry with you?"

Diana smiled at him. He was too, too clever.

Then he wanted to know about the parcel. How

had she got it? Because he had wanted it — he had told Pillar so. "I wanted to keep it," he said, "and some day I was going to pay you out — when you were hungry — on our honeymoon." She let this pass unchallenged. "Diana, did you understand what I said?"

"Why should you have wanted to pay me out? Did you mind being left on the island?" She ignored the honeymoon.

And he said, of course he had minded. If she had stayed with him, he would have loved it. As it was, he had had no one to love but Robinson; he could not imagine what he would have done without Robinson, he had been so sympathetic and — jolly.

Diana was n't particularly interested in Robinson. She wanted to know more about that loneliness from which Miles had suffered so acutely. On that he would not dwell, but rather on the happiness of being on a desert island alone with Diana — some day! Would n't she love it? She thought so, but suggested that if Pillar came too it might be more comfortable. He admitted it, accusing her of being a sybarite.

"You would never enjoy roughing it. You are meant to walk on red carpets — oh — that fatal snare of the red carpet! You shall walk on it some day — but just for once let's go to a desert

island. Have you ever imagined what it would be?"

Then Diana turned her face from the window to look at Miles, and she asked him if they had not both been on a desert island — each on their own — the last few days — or was it years? And Miles, seeing in her eyes the smile she had kept throughout the journey for mountains and burns, jumped to a glorious conclusion.

"You mean that the whole world is a desert island if we are not together?"

And that was just what she did mean, although she had not been able to express it. She had hesitated to put it into words, and now that she found the courage she found no words and she discovered, like many another before her, that they are but dumb things after all: that there are other ways and better ways of saying things: that nothing is so expressive as a silence, nothing tells so much or tells it so tenderly — that is, if it be a happy silence. The unbroken silence of misunderstanding is another thing.

"Now tell me," she said, "what you want to say — I will be very serious."

Miles had only to pass on the message the old woman had given him over the low stone wall, on his way to Glenbossie. In her Gaelic-spoken message she had given him the eternally old message,

and though he "had not Gaelic," he had understood it, because she had spoken in the universal language. A lover's language may be as new as the morning; it is also as old as the hills. And that old woman had not forgotten the days of her youth, and why? Because the sun was in the heavens, by day, to remind her: the stars in the sky at night: the burn on the hillside: the heather on the moor: the little children passing by — tender reminders, these. Even the rain must re-awaken memories of the enfolded plaid: the peat smoke bring back memories of evenings when the day was past and over, the harvest gathered in, and the bairns asleep.

As with Dick and his mother the parting lay like a weight on the hearts of Miles and Diana. When she said it would not be for long, he laughed. She little knew how short a time it might be, or that it rested with her to make it short or interminable. He had promised to leave her when he had seen her into the train which should take her on to Loch Bossie and he saw her into that train. When she asked him why he did n't come on with her, he said it was against orders. Against whose? she wanted to know. He would not tell her. She asked him if he should go south that night?

And he said he should go to Glenbossie by the next train.

"Why not by this?"

Because, he said, he had promised not to go by her train unless something should happen to make him alter his plans.

The dear old lady would have been more human if she had not made this impossible condition, he thought, but she had made it.

"Diana?" he said.

"What?"

"You have never told me."

"No — "

"Won't you?"

She shook her head. There was n't time — it would take years — the train was going — it was off — Miles was left on the platform.

Then Diana looked out of the carriage window, smiled at him, and drew back — and with one stride Miles was on the step of the guard's van —

Having made friends with the guard, which was not difficult, he sat down to write to Mrs. Sloane. He sat on a stout wooden box, which, according to the label, belonged to one Christina MacDonald. He hoped Christina was as happy as he was. She must be: perhaps she had gone from London and was going home. From London to Scotland. Happy Christina! Perhaps she was going home to be married! Dear Christina! He loved her, as he loved every one in the world that morning. But he must write his letter: he wrote:

"I am in the guard's van. The circumstances proved quite exceptional — I did not make them so — and the separation was more than I could bear. Now that I am near her I am absurdly happy, because I believe she is a little unhappy because — she thinks — I am not near her. I saw her into this train, as I promised, and just as the train was going out of the station she popped her beautiful little head out of the window and smiled at me — I thought I saw tears in her eyes! Do I stand exonerated? How can I thank you? I shall never be able to. There is so much I want to say and I am too shy to say it. Why need I say anything to you who understand everything? But I feel in honour bound to explain to you why I am in the guard's van — you must have known I should be there! As a boy I thought it the best place on the train — now I know one better!"

XXIII

God made both joy and sorrow —
Tears for to-day, smiles for to-morrow.

SHAN'T opened her eyes. She opened them just as naturally as she used to open them every morning of her life.

She looked first at Marcus, then at Elsie. Then she looked at his hand on hers, then at Aunt Elsie's hand on hers, and she smiled.

"Shan't?" said Marcus, and suddenly Elsie wanted to cry. He should not have said it like that — she had n't been prepared for it.

"Speak to her," he said.

"Shan't," whispered Elsie.

"Shan't-if-I-don't-want-to," said Shan't, and then she laughed: tried to laugh. Most pathetic of all efforts is that of the sick child who tries to laugh. No laugh brings so quickly tears to the eyes of those who watch — who have so lately wondered that there could be any one in the world with the heart to laugh!

Then Shan't pulled her hand from under Uncle Marcus's hand, and her other hand from under Aunt Elsie's, and taking Uncle Marcus's hand laid

it on Aunt Elsie's — and having done all that she went to sleep. She was tired — and naturally.

She had done — weak and ill — what the strongest man would not have dared to do.

"How are the dogs?" whispered Marcus.

"Very good — and *so* obedient," said Elsie softly.

THE END

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